



Ulrich Middeldorf







SOUVENIRS
OF
MADAME VIGÉE LE BRUN.

WITH A PORTRAIT
ENGRAVED FROM AN ORIGINAL PAINTING BY THE AUTHOR.

THIRD AMERICAN EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED

BY

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LETTERS

TO THE

PRINCESS KOURAKIN.

LETTER I.

My Childhood—My Parents—I am placed in a Convent—My Love of
Painting—Poinsinet—Davesne—I leave the Convent—My Brother.



Y dear good friend—you wish me so very much to write you my Souvenirs that I will no longer refrain from satisfying you. What sad feelings will rise within me as I recall the different scenes I have witnessed and the friends who no longer exist, except in my thoughts! However it will not be a difficult task, for my heart remembers well its former friends and in my solitary hours they seem still to be near me, in my imagination.

I will begin by telling you, dear friend, about my childhood and youth, for they foretold my life, since my love for painting developed itself from my earliest years. I was placed in a convent at the age of six; and there I remained till I was eleven. All that time I scribbled everywhere and on everything—my copy books and those

of my companions were filled with little heads and profiles ; I drew figures and landscapes with charcoal on the walls of the dormitories, and as you can suppose I was often punished for that freak. During my play-hours I traced on the sand everything that came into my head. I remember at the age of seven or eight I drew by lamp-light a man's head with his beard, which I have always preserved. I showed it to my father who was extremely pleased, and said : *Thou wilt be a painter, my child, if ever there was one.*

I tell you all this to show you how innate in me was my love for painting—this love has never decreased ; I even believe it has increased with age, for even now I feel the charm of it the same as of yore, and I hope indeed it will not leave me as long as I live. Besides, it is to this divine passion that I am indebted not only for my fortune but my happiness ; in my youth, as well as at the present time, it has brought me in contact with the most distinguished and most charming characters in Europe, both men and women. The memory of so many remarkable people gives a great charm to my solitude—I can still see those that are no more, and I am thankful that I have still these visions of a past happiness.

My health in the convent was not very strong, so that my father and mother often came and took me away to spend a few days with them, which was very delightful for me in many ways.

My father, Louis Vigée, drew very well in chalks ; there are some portraits of his worthy of Latour. He also did some oil paintings after Watteau. The one you have seen

at my house is rich in colouring and very spirited. But to return to the delights of my father's home, I must tell you that he allowed me to try chalks also, and all day long I used to dabble with his pencils.

He loved his art so much, that at times he used to behave in a most eccentric manner, through his love for it. I remember one day he had dressed himself for dining in Paris and had left the house ; but remembering a painting which he had just begun he turned back again, to retouch it. He then took off his wig, put on a night cap and afterwards went out of doors wearing his gold-laced coat and his sword, &c. Had it not been for a kind neighbour who reminded him of his costume, he would have wandered all about the city in that guise.

My father was very witty and clever. His gaiety was so natural that every one felt inspired with it too, and very often people came to have their portraits taken on account of his lively conversation and originality ; perhaps you know the following anecdote : One day whilst he was taking the portrait of a rather pretty woman, he noticed that when he worked at her mouth she kept screwing it up to make it as small as possible.

Irritated at last by this trick my father said to her with much calmness :

"Don't distress yourself, Madame, if you particularly wish it, I can draw you with none at all."

My mother* was very beautiful. One can well believe

* Jeanne Maissin, daughter of Christopher Maissin and of Catherine Grand-Jean, was born in 1728, at Orges, in the diocese of Treves.

that from the portrait in chalks which my father made of her, as well as from one which I took in oils much later.* She was rigidly virtuous. My father adored her like a divinity ; but grisettes had a great attraction for him. New Year's Day was a festival indeed ; he used to rush all over Paris, without paying a single visit, solely for the purpose of embracing all the young girls whom he met, under the pretence of wishing them the usual New Year's greetings.

I was naturally religious and my mother was the same. We always attended the mass and the every day services. During Lent we never missed one, not even the evening prayers. Sacred music always had a great influence over me, and the sound of an organ at one time made such an impression on me that I wept without the least idea of why I did so. That sound always reminds me now of my father's death.

In those days my father knew several artists and literary men, who used to come and spend the evening with us. I shall put Doyen† at the head, an historical painter, my father's most intimate friend and my first one. Doyen was an excellent man, full of wit and good sense ; his ideas about people and things were always very correct ; and he spoke so enthusiastically of painting that he used

* This portrait is oval, half-length ; I painted it at the age of fifteen years and a half.—ED.

† Gabriel Doyen, born at Paris, 1726, died at St. Petersburg, 1806. His most celebrated paintings were the "Death of Virginia" and "Death of St. Louis."

to make my heart beat with the same feeling ; Poinsinet* was also very gay and bright ; many of his works and plays are still appreciated, and he is the only literary man who ever received three dramatic triumphs in one evening : *Ernelinde*, at the Grand Opéra ; *Le Cercle*, at the Français, and *Tom Jones*, at the Opéra Comique. It was said at the time by some one speaking about the Cercle, where the society of that period is very well depicted, that Poinsinet must have listened behind the doors to know so well about its ins and outs. His end was very tragical. He was seized with a wish to travel, and began by visiting Spain, where he was drowned in crossing the Guadalquivir.

I must not forget to mention Davesne, a painter as well as a poet, but not by any means a proficient in either art, whose very witty conversation made him always welcome at my father's house. I shall never forget, though I was so very young at the time, how cheerful those evenings used to be. I was made to leave the room before desert ; but from my room I could hear laughing, singing, and mirth, which to tell the truth I did not fully understand, but which nevertheless made my holidays all the more delightful.

When I was eleven, I left the convent, after having been confirmed, and Davesne, who painted in oils, asked me to

* Antoine-Alexandre-Henri Poinsinet, French dramatic author. He composed several very successful plays ; "*Le Cercle*," or "*A Fashionable Evening*," was long played at the Théâtre Français. He was born at Fontainebleau, 17th of November, 1735, and died at Cordova, 7th of June, 1769.

go to his house, so that he might teach me how to handle a palette ; his wife came to fetch me.* They were so poor that they were piteous to behold. One day they begged me to remain and dine with them, as I wished to finish a head I had commenced ; and this meal was composed only of soup and roast potatoes. I believe that neither of them made any real meal except when they had supper at my father's.

It was a great pleasure to me not to leave my parents any more. My brother, who was younger by two years than myself, was very handsome, and wonderfully clever for his age ; he progressed very quickly with his studies, and was a great favourite with his masters who used to send home most flattering accounts of his work. I was far from having his wit and brightness, and his pretty face, for at that time I was rather plain. I had an enormous forehead, my eyes were sunk deep in my head ; my nose was the only good feature in my thin, pale face. I had grown so fast that I found it hard to stand upright, and I used to bend like a reed. All these imperfections were a great trial to my mother. I always knew she had a fancy for my brother rather than for myself, for she spoilt him, and forgave him very quickly when he was naughty, whilst she was very severe with me.

My father, on the contrary, made up for it by petting me immensely. His tenderness endeared him very much to me, so that his memory seems always present with me,

* Davesne exhibited the portrait of his wife in 1774 at the Academy of St. Luke.

and I do not think I have forgotten a single word which he said before me. How many times have I remembered the following incident, in 1789, as a sort of prophecy! One day my father seemed so depressed and sad on leaving a dinner-party where he had met Diderot, Helvetius, and d'Alembert, that my mother asked him the reason. "All that I have heard, dear friend, shows me that the world will soon be turned upside down."

I will finish this long letter, my dearest, and embrace you with all my heart.





LETTER II.

Death of my Father—I work in Briard's Studio—Joseph Vernet ; Counsels given me by him—The Abbé Arnault—I visit some Galleries of Paintings—My Mother marries again—My Step-father—I take Portraits—Count Orloff—Count Schouvaloff—Madame Geofrin's Visit—The Duchesse de Chartres—The Palais Royal—Mademoiselle Duthé and Mademoiselle Boquet.



P to the present time, dear friend, I have only told you of my joys ; I must now tell you of the first affliction which I suffered, and of my first real grief.

I had been at home for about one happy year when my father fell ill. He swallowed a fish-bone which lodged in his throat, and several incisions had to be made in order to dislodge it. The operations were performed by the *frère Come*,* in whom we placed every confidence, and who was like a saint. He tended my father with the greatest care, but in spite of all his affectionate assiduity, the wound became envenomed, and after two months of great suffering, my father's condition left no hope of recovery. My mother wept day and night, and I cannot

* Jean Bashillia, called Frère Come, was born at Ponyastine, near Tarbes, the 5th of April, 1703 ; he was considered a clever operator.

describe to you my own grief. I was losing the best of fathers, my support and guide; he whose kindness encouraged my first attempts at painting.

When he felt himself dying, my father desired my brother and myself to approach. We drew near his bed, weeping bitterly. His face was cruelly altered; his eyes and face, usually so animated, were sunk and dimmed, for already the chill hand of death had laid itself upon him. We took his hand and covered it with kisses and tears. He made an effort to rise, and gave us his benediction: "Be happy, my children," said he. An hour later our excellent father was no more.*

My grief was so great that it was a long time before I could touch my pencils. Doyen came to see us sometimes, and as he had been my father's best friend, his visits were a great consolation. It was he who persuaded me to take up my beloved occupation again, and indeed I always found distraction and forgetfulness of my woes whilst I was painting. At this time I began painting from nature and from casts. I made several portraits in oils and pastels. I drew also landscapes and from casts with Mademoiselle Boquet,† whom I then knew. I spent

* Louis Vigée, Painter of the Academy of St. Luke, died May 9th, 1768.

† In 1751 Mademoiselle Boquet, Member of the Academy of St. Luke, exhibited in the salons of this Academy the portrait of M. Eisen, painter. This painting was presented by the author for his reception into the Academy of St. Luke. She exhibited in the same year the portrait of Madame Boquet, her mother, as well as several other portraits.

the evening with her in the Rue St. Denis, opposite the Rue de la Truanderie, where her father kept a curiosity shop. It was a long way off, for we lived in the Rue de Cléry, opposite the Hotel Lubert; consequently, my mother never allowed me to walk there alone.

At that time Mademoiselle Boquet and myself used to draw a great deal with Briard, the painter,* who lent us his designs and ancient busts to copy. Briard was not a very good painter, although he did some ceilings which were remarkable for their composition, but he was an excellent draughtsman, which was the reason that several young artists came to take lessons from him. He lived at the Louvre. We had each our dinner brought us in a little basket by the servant, so that we might draw for a longer time. I can still remember how we used to enjoy buying from the *concierger* at one of the entrances to the Louvre pieces of beef *à la mode*, which were so delicious that I have never eaten anything better in my life.

Mademoiselle Boquet was then fifteen years old, and I was fourteen. We were rival beauties, for I have forgotten to tell you, dear friend, that a complete metamorphosis had taken place in me, and that I had become pretty. She had remarkable talent, and my progress in painting was so rapid that people had begun to talk about me in the world, which caused me to have the satisfaction

* Gabriel Briard, historical painter, was born in Paris in 1725, and died in 1777; he was nominated Member of the Royal Academy of Paintings, April 30th, 1768. He painted amongst other great ceilings that of the Château de Louveciennes.

of knowing Joseph Vernet.* That celebrated artist encouraged me and gave the best advice. "My child," said he, "do not follow any particular school. Only consult the works of the great Italian and Flemish masters; but, above all, do as much as you can from nature. Nature is the best master. If you study it diligently, you will never get into any mannerisms." I have always followed his advice, for properly speaking, I have never had a master. As for Joseph Vernet, he has proved the excellence of his method by his works, which have been, and will be always, justly admired.

I also made the acquaintance of the Abbé Arnault, of the Académie Française. He was a man of much imagination, passionately fond of literature and art, whose conversation enriched my ideas, if I may be allowed to explain myself so. He spoke most enthusiastically about Painting and Music, and was an ardent partisan of Glück. Later on he brought that great musician to my house, for I loved music also.

My mother was very proud of my looks and figure, for I had become plump again, which gave me the freshness of youth. On Sundays she used to walk with me in the Tuileries. She was still very beautiful herself at that time, and it is so long ago now that I do not mind telling you that we were followed about in such a manner that I was much more embarrassed than flattered by the attention we excited. My mother, seeing me always so de-

* Madame Vigée Le Brun did the portrait of Joseph Vernet in 1789, it was exhibited in the Louvre during her lifetime.

pressed at the cruel loss I had had, thought the best thing to distract my mind was to take me to see paintings. We visited the Palace of the Luxembourg, when the gallery was filled with the masterpieces of Rubens, and many other rooms crowded with the works of great masters. Now, one can see there the paintings of modern French artists ; I am the only one who has none in that collection. These paintings have been since transported to the Museum of the Louvre, and those of Rubens lose much from not being seen in the place they were painted. Well or badly hung pictures are like pieces of music well or badly played. We went also to see some good private collections. Rendon de Boisset possessed a gallery of Flemish and French pictures. The Duc de Praslin and the Marquis de Levis had rich collections from every school. M. Harens Le Preste had a beautiful one of Italian masters, but none could be compared with that of the Palais Royal, which had been formed by the Regent, and which contained so many *chefs-d'œuvres* by great Italian masters. It was sold during the Revolution. An Englishman, Lord Stafford, bought most of the paintings.

From the time I entered one of these rich galleries, I could only be compared to a bee picking up knowledge and ideas for my art, and becoming quite intoxicated in the contemplation of great masters. I copied several paintings by Rubens, some by Rembrandt and Vandyck, and several heads of young girls by Greuze, because these last thoroughly explained the semitones which are found in delicate carnations ; Vandyck explains them also, but much more delicately.

I owe to these studies the important knowledge of the gradations of light on the most projecting portions of the head, gradations which I admire so much in Raphael, who combines, indeed, every perfection. And, indeed, it is only in Rome, and under the beautiful Italian sky that Raphael can justly be appreciated. When, later on, I was enabled to behold those of his masterpieces which have never left their country, I found Raphael to be above his immense reputation.

My father left no fortune ; I earned a good deal of money already, having several portraits to take ; but that did not suffice for the household expenses, seeing that I had also to pay for my brother's schooling, his clothes, and books, &c. My mother was, therefore, compelled to remarry.* She espoused a rich jeweller,† whom we had never suspected of being avaricious, and yet who became immediately after his marriage so mean that he refused us the bare necessities of life, although I was good enough to give him all that I earned. Joseph Vernet was furious ; he continually advised me to pay him a pension, and keep the overplus for myself, but I did not do so. I was afraid lest with such a miser my mother would suffer. I hated this man all the more because he had appropriated my father's wardrobe, and wore his clothes, just as they were, without any alterations. You can easily understand, dear friend, what a sad impression they made on me !

I had, as I have already told you, several portraits on

* This marriage took place in January, 1768.

† Called Jacques-François Le Sevre.

hand, and already my youthful reputation attracted to me several foreigners. Many great Russian personages came to visit me, amongst others, the celebrated Count Orloff, one of the assassins of Peter III. He was a colossal man, and I remember he wore a remarkably large diamond-ring upon his finger.

I painted almost immediately afterwards the portrait of Count Schouvaloff,* Grand-Chamberlain. He was then, I believe, about sixty, and had been the lover of the Empress Elizabeth II. of Russia. He combined perfect politeness with charming manners, and, as he was a most agreeable man, he was sought by the best society.

I received at the same time the visit of Madame Geoffrin,† whose *salon* made her so celebrated. Madame Geoffrin entertained at her house all the most distinguished literary and artistic men, foreigners and courtiers. Without birth, talents, or any fortune to speak of, she created for herself in Paris a position unique in its way, and which no woman to-day would be able to accomplish. Having heard me spoken about, she came to see me one morning, and made very flattering remarks on my person and talent. Although she was not very old then, I should have thought her at least a hundred, for not only did she stoop a great deal, but her costume aged her immensely. She wore an

* Madame Vigée Le Brun mentions in her catalogue of portraits, the portrait of Count Schouvaloff as having been painted in 1775, which was seven years after her mother's marriage.

† Madame Geoffrin, (Marie-Thérèse Rodet,) born in Paris in 1699, died in that city in 1777.

iron-grey dress, with a large flapped cap, covered with a black hood, tied under her chin. At her age now-a-days women, on the contrary, contrive to make themselves look younger by the care they take about their dress.

Soon after my mother's marriage, we lodged with my step-father, in the Rue St. Honoré, opposite the Terrace of the Palais Royal, on to which my windows looked. I often saw the Duchesse de Chartres walking in the gardens with her ladies, and I noticed that she looked at me with much interest and kindness. I had just finished the portrait of my mother, which was much spoken of at the time. The Duchesse sent for me to paint her's at the Palace. She communicated to those about her her great sympathy for my youthful talent, so that it was not long before I received the visit of the noble and beautiful Comtesse de Brionne and her daughter, the Princesse de Lorraine, who was extremely pretty, and after that of all the great ladies of the Court and the Faubourg St. Germain.

Since I have already told you, dear friend, how much attention I excited at promenades and other sights, so much so that I often had crowds around me, you can easily understand that several admirers of my countenance made me paint their's also, in the hope of pleasing me, but I was so absorbed in my art that nothing had the power of distracting my thoughts. Besides, the moral and religious precepts inculcated by my mother protected me from the seductions with which I was surrounded. Fortunately for me, I had never read a single novel. The first I read (it was "Clarissa Harlowe," which interested me

extremely) was not till after my marriage ; up to that time I read only religious books, "The Lives of the Holy Fathers" amongst others, for everything is contained therein, and a few class-books belonging to my brother.

But to return to these admirers. As soon as I discovered that they wanted to gaze at me with "*les yeux tendres*," I painted them with the eyes averted, which prevented them from regarding the painter. And then, at the least movement round of their eyes, I said : "I am just at the eyes," which was annoying for them, as you can suppose ; my mother, who never left me, and whom I had taken into my confidence, used to be much entertained.

About this time the Marquis de Choiseul was amongst the number of my admirers with the loving glances, which enraged me, for he had just married a lovely girl. She was a Mademoiselle Rabi, an American, only sixteen years old. I do not believe a prettier creature ever lived.

On *fête* days and Sundays, after having heard mass, my mother and step-father used to take me out into the Palais Royal. At that time the garden was much larger and more beautiful than it is now—hemmed in by houses, which quite surround it. On the left there was a broad and very long alley, shaded by great trees, which formed a kind of arch, impenetrable to the sun. It was there that the beauty and fashion of Paris used to promenade. As for the other set, they took refuge some way off under the quince trees.

The opera was then close by ; it was in the Palace. In

summer it was over at half-past eight, and all the most elegant women left even before it was over, and adjourned to the garden instead. It was then the fashion for women to carry enormous bouquets, the odour of which, added to that of the strongly-scented powder used in the hair, made the air seem quite embalmed. Long after, but before the Revolution, I have seen these *réunions* prolonged till two in the morning, with open-air music by moonlight. Many artists and amateurs sang there, including Garat and Asevedo. It was crowded with people, and the famous St. Georges * often played his violin.

It was there that I saw for the first time the elegant and pretty Mademoiselle Duthé, who used to walk about with other women of light character ; for in those days no gentlemen were ever seen with such people ; if they joined them at the play it was always in covered boxes. Englishmen are less delicate on this point—this same Mademoiselle Duthé was often accompanied by an Englishman, so devoted, that eighteen years after I saw them still together at the theatre in London. The brother of this man was with them, and I was informed that all three lived together. You have no idea, dear friend, what bad women were like in those days. Mademoiselle Duthé, for instance, expended millions ; now that trade is nowhere ; few would ruin themselves for such women.

This reminds me of a speech of the Duchesse de Chartres, whose naïveté I have always enjoyed. I have

* Chevalier de Saint-Georges, a Mulatto, born in Guadeloupe in 1745 and died 1799. Son of a coloured woman and M. de Boulogne.

already written to you about her, worthy descendant of the virtuous and benevolent Duc de Penthièvre. Shortly after her marriage, as she was standing at her window, one of her gentlemen in waiting seeing some of these women pass by said : " here are some shady creatures." " How do you know they are not married ?" replied the Duchess in her most candid ignorance.

We never walked in that long alley of the Palais Royal, Mademoiselle Boquet and myself, without attracting great attention. We were then about sixteen and seventeen, and Mademoiselle Boquet was very beautiful. At nineteen she had the small-pox which created quite a sensation, and all classes of society made inquiries about her progress; numerous carriages were at her door every day. In those days beauty was really an advantage.

Mademoiselle Boquet was remarkably talented, but she gave up painting soon after her marriage with M. Filleul, at which time the Queen appointed her keeper of the Château de la Muette. I wish I could tell you about this charming woman, without recalling her tragical fate. Alas ! I remember at the time I was leaving France to flee from the horrors which I foresaw, Madame Filleul said : " You are wrong to leave, I shall remain ; for I believe in the happiness which this revolution will bring us." And that revolution led her to the scaffold ! She had not left the Château de la Muette when those days, rightly called the Days of Terror, came upon France. Madame Chalignin, daughter of Joseph Vernet, and an intimate friend of Madame Filleul was celebrating in the château her daughter's marriage, without any display as you can sup-

pose. Nevertheless, the day after, the revolutionists came and arrested Madame Filleul and Madame Chalgrin, who, they said, had "burnt the candles of the nation," and both were guillotined a few days afterwards.

I will now finish this sad letter.





LETTER III.

My Walks—The Coliseum, the Summer Vauxhall—Marly, Sceaux—My Society in Paris—Le Moine, the Sculptor—Gerbier—The Princesse de Rohan-Rochefort—The Comtesse de Brionne—The Cardinal de Rohan—M. de Rhullières—The Duc de Lauzun—I present to the Academy the Portraits of Cardinal de Fleury and De la Bruyère—D'Alembert's Letter, and his Visit on that occasion.



WILL now again continue, dear friend, the thread of my narrative in what I call old Paris, the Paris of my youth, for this city has changed since then in every way. One of the most frequented promenades was the Boulevard du Temple. Every day, but especially on Thursdays, hundreds of carriages passed to and fro, or were drawn up alongside alleys where are now cafés and shops. The young horsemen used to caracole around them as at Longchamps, for Longchamps existed even then.

It was a brilliant scene, crowded with people admiring and criticizing the well dressed women and beautiful equipages.

One side of the Boulevard where the Café Turc now stands, presented a sight which has often made me laugh heartily. It was a long line of old fish-women, sitting gravely on chairs with their cheeks so covered with rouge

that they looked like dolls. As at that time only women of high rank could use rouge, these ladies considered they also were privileged to do the same to their heart's content. One of our friends who was acquainted with several of them, told us that they played *loto* from morning till evening when indoors, and that one day as he was returning from Versailles one of them asked him for news; he replied that he had just been informed that M. de la Pérouse was about to sail round the world. "Really!" exclaimed the mistress of the house, "that man must have very little to do!"

Later on, some time after my marriage, I have seen many little plays on this boulevard. The only one which I frequently visited and which amused me extremely was that of the puppets belonging to Carlo Perico. These creatures were so well made and moved so naturally that people were sometimes deceived by them. My daughter, when about six years old and who went with me to see them sometimes, never imagined that they were not alive. When I had told her the contrary, I remember taking her a few days after to the *Comédie Française* where my box was some way from the play, "And those, mamma, are they alive?" she asked.

The Coliseum was a promenade much in vogue; it was placed in one of the great squares of the *Champs Elysées*, in an immense Rotunda. In the centre was a lake, filled with limpid water, on which were held aquatic sports. You walked all round in broad pathways, sanded over and lined with seats. When it was dark everyone left the garden, and adjourned to an immense

salon, where you heard every evening excellent music with a good orchestra. Mademoiselle Lemaure, very celebrated, at that time, sang very often there, as well as many other celebrated singers. The broad flight of steps which led to this concert room was the rendezvous of all the young Parisian dandies, who, placing themselves beneath the illuminated doorways, never allowed a woman to pass without some epigram. One evening as I was descending the steps with my mother, the Duc de Chartres, (afterwards Philippe Egalité) was standing by, arm in arm with the Marquis de Genlis, the companion of his orgies, and the poor women who passed by did not escape from their most shameful sarcasms. "Ah! as for this one," said the Duke in a loud voice, pointing to me, "there is nothing to be said!" This speech, which several others heard as well as myself, gave me so much satisfaction that even now I recall it with a feeling of pleasure.

About the same time there existed on the Boulevard du Temple a place called the summer Vauxhall, of which the garden was composed of only a blank space destined for walking, and around which were covered benches for people to sit. My wretched step-father, worried no doubt by the admiration received by my mother when in public, and, if I dare say so, from that which I created also, forbade our taking any promenades, and told us one day he was going to take a country house. At these words my heart beat with joy, for I was passionately fond of the country. I wished to go there all the more because I slept nearly at the foot of my mother's bed, in a dark corner which the daylight never reached. So that in the

morning, no matter what the weather was like, my first care was to open the window and breathe, so much did I need fresh air.

My step-father hired a little bit of a house at Chaillot, and we slept there on Saturdays and returned to Paris on Monday morning. Heavens ! what a place ! imagine a very tiny garden ; no trees and no shade, except in a little arbour where my father had planted beans and runners which never grew ; and we had not the whole even of this charming garden ; it was divided into four parts by little sticks, and the three others were let to shop boys who used to spend their Sundays in firing at the birds. This perpetual noise made me feel desperate, besides I was dreadfully afraid of being killed by these novices, they fired so badly.

I could not understand why such a stupid unpicturesque place as this should be called the country ; I was so bored there that it makes me yawn to write about it.

At last my guardian angel sent to my deliverance a friend of my mother's, Madame Suzanne, who came with her husband to dine at Chaillot. Both took pity on me and made me take some delightful excursions. Unfortunately it was impossible to count on M. Suzanne every Sunday, for he had a most singular malady ; out of every two days he shut himself up for one in his room, and saw no one, not even his wife ; and never spoke or eat. The next day it is true he was all right again and resumed his former habits, but you can see that to be sure of getting him, one had to be well acquainted with the intermittent state of his health.

We went first to Marly-le-Roi, where for the first time I saw an enchanting abode. On each side of the château, which was superb, were six pavillions, joined to each other by bowers of jasmine and honeysuckle. Cascades came rushing down a hill at the back of the château, and formed a lake on which were stately swans. These beautiful trees, green bowers, basins and fountains, one of which rose to such a height that it was lost to sight, were all grand and regal, for all bespoke Louis XIV. The sight of this exquisite place made such an impression on me, that after my marriage I often returned to Marly.

It was there that I met one morning Queen Marie Antoinette, who was walking in the park with several of her court ladies. All were in white dresses, and were so young and pretty that they looked like apparitions. I was with my mother, and we were retreating from them when the Queen had the goodness to stop, and desired me to continue my promenade wherever I pleased. Alas ! when I returned to France in 1802, I hastened to revisit my noble smiling Marly. The palace, trees, cascades, all had disappeared ; I only found one stone left which seemed to mark the centre of the salon.

M. and Madame Suzanne took me also to see the château and park of Sceaux. One portion of this park, that which was near the château, was systematically laid out in flower beds and parterres, filled with quantities of flowers, as in the Tuileries gardens, the other was left to itself ; but a magnificent canal and beautiful trees made it far preferable to my taste. A thing which proved the kindness of the lord of this fine domain, was that the park was

open to the public ; the excellent Duc de Penthièvre had always desired that every one should enter there, and on Sundays this place was very frequented.

I found it very hard to leave these lovely gardens and go back to gloomy Chaillot. At length, winter obliged us to return for good to Paris, where I passed the time very agreeably when my work allowed it. From the age of sixteen I had mixed in the best society, and knew all our first artists, so that I received invitations from all quarters. I remember very well dining the first time in Paris with Le Moine, the sculptor, then very renowned. He was a man of great simplicity ; but he had the good taste to bring together at his house a number of celebrated and distinguished characters ; his two daughters did the honours perfectly. It was there I met the famous Le Kain,* whose fierce sullen looks frightened me ; his enormous eyebrows added to the gloom of his countenance. He never spoke, but eat hugely. By his side, and opposite to me, was Madame de Bonneuil,† the prettiest woman in Paris, mother of Madame Regnault St. Jean d'Angély ; she was then as fresh as a rose. Her sweet looks possessed such a charm for me that I could not turn away my eyes, all the more because she was seated near her husband, who

* Henri-Louis Kain, called Lekain, a celebrated tragedian, born in Paris, April 14th, 1728, and died in that city, February 8th, 1778. The manuscript diary of Lekain's representations is to be found in the Bibliothèque Impériale at Paris ; his memoirs have been published by his son.

† Madame Vigée Le Brun made three portraits of Madame Bonneuil in 1773.

resembled an ugly monkey, and whose face, combined with that of Lekain, formed a setting of which she had no need.

It was at Le Moine's that I knew Gerbier, the lawyer ; his daughter Madame de Boissy * was very beautiful and was one of the first women whose portrait I took. Grétry and Latour, two famous pastel painters, often assisted at these dinners; we laughed and amused ourselves well. It was the custom then to sing at dessert : Madame de Bonneuil, who had a charming voice, sang with her husband some of Grétry's duets ; then came the turn of all the young girls, who were much tortured by this fashion, for they turned pale and trembled and often sang false in consequence. Notwithstanding which little disagreeables, the dinner ended pleasantly, and we always left with regret, far from asking for our carriages, in rising from the table, as is done nowadays.

I cannot speak much of the great dinners though, except by hearsay, seeing that shortly after the time of which I write, I ceased to dine in Paris at all. The daylight was really too precious for me to give its hours to society, and an accident which happened to me, decided me to go out only in the evening. I had accepted a dinner with the Princesse de Rohan-Rochefort ; I was dressed and ready to step into a carriage when I thought I would go and see a portrait which I had begun that morning. I wore a white satin dress which I had put on for the first time, and I sat down on a chair which was opposite to my easel with-

* It was in 1773 that Madame Vigée Le Brun took the portraits of Monsieur and Madame Boissy.

out noticing that my palette was placed upon it ; you may judge that I made my dress in such a mess that I was obliged to remain at home, and from that day I formed a resolution only to accept suppers.

The dinners of the Princesse de Rohan-Rochefort were charming. The nucleus of her society was composed of the beautiful Comtesse de Brionne and her daughter, the Princesse de Lorraine, the Duc de Choiseuil, Cardinal de Rohan and M. de Rhullières, the author of the "Disputes ;" but the most agreeable of all the guests was without contradiction the Duc de Lauzun ; none other possessed such wit and humour, he charmed everybody. Often the evening was spent in music, and I sometimes sang and accompanied myself on the guitar. We had supper at half-past ten, and were never more than ten or twelve at table. It was a race for who could be most gay and witty. I only listened, and though too young to fully appreciate the charm of these conversations, they disgusted me with many others.

I have often told you, dear friend, that my life as a young girl was unlike that of most people. Not only did my talent, small as it appeared to me in contrast to the great masters, make me sought out and welcomed in every salon ; but I received besides some marks of public sympathy, from which I frankly avow I derived much satisfaction. For instance, I had made from the engravings of the time, the portraits of Cardinal Fleury and of La Bruyère. I presented them to the Académie Française, which, through the medium of d'Alembert, its secretary, sent me the following letter which I copy here and which I have carefully preserved.

“Mademoiselle,

“The Académie Française has received with much pleasure the charming letter which you have written to them, and the fine portraits of Fleury and of La Bruyère which you had the kindness to send to be placed in the Assembly Hall, where they have long desired to see them. These two portraits, in recalling two men whose names are cherished by them, will also bring back, Mademoiselle, the remembrance of what they owe to you, of what they are proud to owe. Moreover, to their eyes these portraits will be a lasting memorial of your rare talents, which were known to them by public report, and which are heightened still more by your wit, grace, and great modesty.

“The Company, wishing to show some token of gratitude in return for your kindness, in the manner most agreeable to yourself, pray you, Mademoiselle, to be good enough to accept your free entry to all their public assemblies. That is what they decided yesterday in the assembly by unanimous deliberation, which was at once inscribed in the Registers, and with which I was charged to make you acquainted, in adding their sincere thanks. This commission pleases me all the more, because it gives me an opportunity of showing you, Mademoiselle, the feelings of sincere esteem with which I have long been imbued for your talents and person, and which I share with all men of taste and honour.

“I have the honour to be, Mademoiselle,

“Your very humble and obedient servant,

“D’ALEMBERT.

“Paris, August 10th, 1775.”

The presentation of these two portraits to the Academy procured for me, shortly after, a visit from d'Alembert, a little man, very hard and cold, but exquisitely polite. He remained for some time and explored my studio, making several flattering speeches all the while. I have never forgotten that, after he had left, a great lady who happened to be there at the time, asked me if I had done those portraits of La Bruyère and of Fleury from life. "I am rather too young for that," I replied, laughing, but very glad, for the lady's sake, that the Academician had left.

Adieu, dear friend !





LETTER IV.

My Marriage—I take Pupils ; Madame Benoist—I give up this School—My Portraits and how I drew them—Séance at the French Academy—My Daughter—The Duchesse de Mazarin—The Ambassadors of Tippoo Saib—Paintings which I do for them—Dinners which they give me.



EAR friend, my step-father having retired from business, we went to lodge in the Hotel Lubert, Rue de Cléry. M. Le Brun had just bought this house,* and as soon as we were settled, I went to see the splendid paintings of all schools with which his rooms were filled. I was delighted to be in the vicinity of so many masterpieces. M. Le Brun very kindly permitted me to copy, and lent me for that purpose some very valuable and lovely paintings. I owed, therefore, my best lessons to him ; and at the end of six months he made me an offer of marriage. I was not at all anxious to marry him, although he was well made, and had a pleasant face. I was then twenty ; I had no anxieties for my future, as I earned a good deal of money, so

* M. Le Brun was then only the principal tenant ; he bought it later on.

that I did not feel any desire to be married. But my mother, who fancied M. Le Brun was very rich, never ceased to urge me not to refuse such an advantageous *parti*. I at length consented to this marriage,* as much from the longing to escape living with my step-father, whose temper grew worse with every day he was inactive, as from anything else. So little was I inclined to renounce my liberty that in going to church I said to myself, "Shall I say 'yes?' shall I say 'no?'" Alas! I said "yes," and I exchanged my old troubles for other troubles. It was not because M. Le Brun was a bad man; his disposition was a great mixture of sweetness and vivacity; he was good-tempered with all—in a word, he was very amiable; but his head-strong passion for low women, added to a love of gambling, brought about the loss of his fortune and mine, which he entirely disposed of in such a complete manner, that when I left France in 1789 I did not possess twenty francs, though I had then earned over a million. He had dissipated it completely.

My marriage was kept secret for some time. M. Le Brun begged me not to declare it publicly, as he ought to have espoused the daughter of a Dutchman, with whom he transacted a good deal of business concerning his paintings, &c., and he wished it kept secret till his business

* The marriage of Mademoiselle Elisabeth-Louise Vigée, daughter of Louis Vigée, Painter and Member of the Academy of St. Luke, and of Madame Jeanne Maissin, his wife, with Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Le Brun, painter, son of Pierre Le Brun and of Françoise Bouffé, his wife, was celebrated on January 11th, 1776.

was concluded. I consented willingly, for I regretted quitting my maiden name, under which I was very well known already ; but this secrecy which did not last long, had, nevertheless, rather a bad influence on my future. Several people who only thought I was intending to marry M. Le Brun, came to see me to try and dissuade me from doing such a foolish thing. Now it was Auber, Court jeweller, who said, with an air of friendliness and truth : —“ You would do better to fasten a stone round your neck and throw yourself into the river than to marry Le Brun.” Then it was the Duchesse d’Arenbourg, accompanied by Madame de Canillac and Madame de Souza, wife of the Portuguese Ambassador, all three so young and pretty, who brought me their tardy advice, when I had been already married a fortnight. “ For Heaven’s sake ! ” said the Duchess, “ don’t marry M. Le Brun ; you will be very unhappy.” Then she related several things which I luckily did not quite believe, although they have since been confirmed ; but my mother, who was there, could hardly restrain her tears. At length the declaration of my marriage put an end to these gloomy forebodings, which, thanks to my beloved painting, had not depressed me much. I could not paint all the portraits which were demanded of me on every side, and although M. Le Brun took upon himself to appropriate the payments, he did not hesitate to make me take pupils in order to augment our income. I consented to what he wished without reflecting on it, and soon there appeared several young ladies, to whom I had to give instructions as to how to make eyes and noses, which I was always compelled to retouch, and

thereby lose much of my time at my own work, a very vexatious proceeding.

Among my pupils was a Mademoiselle Emilie Roux de la Ville, who afterwards married M. Benoist, Director of the Public Welfare, and for whom Demoustiers wrote the "Letters on Mythology." She drew heads in chalk, and showed much talent, which gained for her a just reputation afterwards. Mademoiselle Emilie was the youngest of my pupils. They were mostly older than myself which detracted from the respect due to the head school-mistress. I had arranged a studio for these demoiselles in a large attic, with large beams running across it. One morning I went upstairs and found my pupils had fastened a rope round one of these beams, and were busy swinging, as well as they could manage it. I put on a dignified air, grumbled, and made a long speech on wasting time ; after which I tried the swing, and had as much fun over it as the others. You can imagine that, with such lively ways, it was difficult for me to impress them much, and this circumstance, added to the bother of returning to the A, B, C of my art in correcting their studies, caused me to renounce having pupils at all.

The necessity of leaving my beloved brushes for a few hours conduced still more, I believe, to my fondness for my work. I never left my painting till it was quite dark, and the number of portraits I finished at that time was simply prodigious. As I had a great dislike to the costume worn by women in those days, I endeavoured to render it more picturesque, and felt enchanted when I obtained leave to drape my models as I pleased. Shawls were not worn

then, but I arranged large scarfs by twining them lightly round the body and arms, seeking by that means to imitate the draperies of Raffaello and Domenichino, which, perhaps, you have noticed in my Russian pictures, especially in the one of my daughter playing the guitar. Another of my prejudices was powder. I persuaded the lovely Duchesse de Grammont-Caderousse not to wear any when she was painted.* Her hair was as black as night, and I parted it in front and arranged it in careless locks. After my *séance*, which finished at dinner-time, the Duchess did not alter her head-dress, and went to the theatre without altering it. Such a pretty woman setting the fashion caused it soon to become popular; which reminds me that in 1786, whilst painting the Queen, I implored her not to wear powder and to divide her hair in front. "I shall be the last to follow that fashion," said the Queen, laughing, "I do not wish it to be said that I invented it, in order to hide my high forehead."

I sought as much as I possibly could to give to the ladies I painted the expression of their countenances. Those that had none in particular, I painted with pensive looks, leaning nonchalantly against some object. I believe that they were well satisfied, for I could not work fast enough to satisfy the demand. It was a scramble to be placed on my list. In a word, I was the fashion. Everything conspired to keep me there. You may judge as much from the following scene which has always left a flattering impression on my mind :—Shortly after my mar-

* Madame Vigée Le Brun painted this portrait in 1789.

riage, I attended a *séance* of the Académie Française ; La Harpe * was reading his discourse on female talent, and when he came to these verses, where the praise is so exaggerated, and which I heard for the first time,

“ Le Brun de la beauté le peintre et le modèle,
Moderne Rosalba, mais plus brillant qu'elle,
Joint la voix de Favart au sourir de Vénus, etc.”

the author of “ Warwick ” looked at me, and immediately the whole assembly, without excepting the Duchesse de Chartres and the King of Sweden, who were present, arose, turned towards me, and gave me such a transport of applause that I felt quite overcome for the time.

These personal triumphs of which I have informed you, dear friend, because you desired me to tell you everything, are far from being compared with the joy I felt when, after two years of marriage, I hoped to become a mother. But here you will see how my extreme love for my art rendered me careless as to the small details of life, for, happy as I felt, I let the time pass by without preparing anything for myself. The day my daughter was born I never quitted my studio, and worked at my “ Venus tying the wings of Love,” in the intervals when I felt no pain.

Madame de Verdun, my oldest friend, came to see me in the morning, and asked me if I was provided with all

* Jean-François de La Harpe, born in Paris, 1739, died in that city, February 11th, 1803. He was son of Jean-François Delharpe and of Marie-Louise Devienne.

that was necessary, as she knew how giddy and careless I was. I answered her, with much surprise, that I did not know what was necessary. "Just like you!" she answered, "you are a regular tomboy. I am certain you will have your trouble to-night." "No! no!" said I, "I have a sitting to-morrow. I will not be ill to-day." Without replying, Madame de Verdun left me a short time to send for a doctor, who arrived soon after. I sent him away, but he remained, unknown to me, till the evening, and at ten o'clock my daughter was born. During the previous months I had painted the Duchesse de Mazarin, who was no longer young, but still retained the remains of great beauty; my daughter had her eyes, and was very like her. This Duchesse de Mazarin it was who was said to have been endowed at her birth by three fairies; one with Riches, one with Beauty, and one with Ill-luck. It is very true that the poor woman could not undertake a single thing, even a *fête*, without some accident happening. Many are the stories told of various disasters which befell her. Here is one which is not so well known:—One evening she gave a supper-party to sixty people, and thought she would have an enormous pie made, in which about a hundred little live birds were imprisoned. On a sign from the Duchess, the pie was opened, and there burst forth all these terrified creatures, who flew into the faces and hair of the ladies present much to their dismay. You can imagine the uproar and screams. They could not get rid of these unfortunate birds, and at last were forced to leave the table, grumbling at such a foolish joke. The Duchesse de Mazarin having become excessively stout,

it took a long time to lace her stays. Some one paid her a visit one day whilst she was being laced up, and one of her waiting-maids ran to the door, saying, "Don't come in till we have arranged the flesh." I remember that this great size excited much admiration from the Turkish Ambassadors. When they were asked at the Opera which woman pleased them best of all they had seen, they replied immediately the Duchesse de Mazarin, because she was the fattest.

Since I am writing about Ambassadors, I will not omit to tell you how I painted two diplomatists in my life who, though copper-coloured, had, none the less, splendid heads. In 1788, some Ambassadors were sent to Paris by the Sultan Tippoo Saib.* I saw these Indians at the Opera, and they appeared to me to be so remarkably picturesque that I wished to paint their portraits. • Having made their interpreter acquainted with my desire, I was informed they would never consent to be portrayed unless the demand came from the King. Therefore I obtained this favour of His Majesty. I went to the hotel which they inhabited; for they wished to be painted there, on large canvas and in colours. When I arrived in their *salon* one of them arose, brought some rose-water and

* Tippoo Saib, Sultan of Mysore, born in 1749, shot on the 4th of May, 1799, at Seringapatam, by an English soldier. He sent an Embassy to France in 1787, charged with the task of concluding an alliance with King Louis XVI., begging for his aid against the English, who he wished to drive out of India. The Mission not succeeding, Tippoo Saib revenged himself on his ambassadors, by causing their heads to be cut off shortly after their return to Mysore.

threw it over my hands, and then the grandest one gave me a sitting. I took him standing, holding his poignard. The draperies, hands, all were taken from life. He stood with such satisfaction and pleasure! I let the painting dry in another room, and I commenced the portrait of the old Ambassador, whom I represented seated, with his son near him. The father had a superb head. Both were dressed in white muslin, worked with gold flowers, and these robes, which are like tunics with large turned-back sleeves, were fastened with rich girdles. I finished the paintings on the spot, with the exception of some portions of the dress.

Madame de Bonneuil, to whom I had spoken about my sittings, had a strong desire to see these Ambassadors. They invited us both to dinner, and we accepted, out of sheer curiosity. On entering the room, we were rather surprised to find the dinner served on the ground, which obliged us to sit, or rather lie down, round the table. They helped us with their hands from the different dishes. One contained a *fricassée* of sheep's trotters, with strongly-spiced white sauce, and the other I know not what kind of stew. We made a sorry repast, as you can imagine. It was very repulsive to see them employing their bronze hands instead of spoons.

These Ambassadors had brought with them a young man who spoke a little French. Madame de Bonneuil taught him to sing "Annette à l'âge de quinze ans" during my *séances*. When we went to make our adieux this young man sang us his song, and expressed his regret at leaving us by saying, "Ah! how my heart weeps!"

which I considered was very Oriental and very appropriate.

When the portrait of Davich Khan was dry, I sent for it to be fetched away, but he had hidden it behind his bed, and would not give it up, pretending that the painting wanted a soul. I could only obtain my portrait by a little *ruse*, and when the Ambassador found it was missing, he became much enraged with his valet, whom he wanted to kill, and the interpreter had all the trouble in the world to make him understand that in Paris it was not the custom to kill valets. Finally, he had to tell him that the King of France desired the portrait. These two paintings were exhibited in the *salon* of 1789. After the death of M. Le Brun, who had appropriated all my works, they were sold, and I know not who possesses them now.

Adieu, my dear, kind friend.





LETTER V.

The Queen—My sittings at Versailles—Different portraits made by me of her—Her Kindness—Louis XVI—Last Court-ball at Versailles—Madame Elizabeth—Monsieur, the King's Brother—Princesse de Lamballe.



I was in the year 1779, my dear friend, that I took the Queen's likeness for the first time ; she was then in all the brilliancy of her youth and beauty. Marie Antoinette was tall, admirably proportioned, plump, without being too much so ; her arms were lovely, she had small and perfectly shaped hands and charming little feet. She walked better than any woman in France ; holding her head very upright, with a majesty which denoted the Sovereign in the midst of her court, without this majestic bearing detracting in the least from the sweetness and grace of her whole aspect. In short, it is very difficult to give any idea to those who have not seen the Queen, how very elegant and beautiful she was. Her features were not at all regular ; she inherited the long narrow oval peculiar to the Austrian nation. Her eyes were not large, and were almost blue in colour ; her expression was clear and very soft, her nose was thin and pretty, and her mouth was not large, although the lips were rather thick. The most remarkable thing

about her face was the brilliancy of her complexion. I never saw anything like it, and brilliant is the only word to express what it was ; for her skin was so transparent that it allowed of no shadow. I never could obtain the effect as I wished ; paints failed to depict the freshness, the delicate tints of that charming face which I never beheld in any other woman.

At first the imposing air of the Queen intimidated me extremely, but Her Majesty spoke to me with so much goodness that her kind manner soon dissipated this impression. It was then I made the portrait which represents her with a large panier, dressed in a satin robe, holding a rose. This picture was destined for her brother, the Emperor Joseph II., and the Queen ordered two copies of it ; one for the Empress of Russia, the other for her apartments at Versailles or Fontainebleau.

I made successfully, at various times, several other portraits of the Queen. I do not know for which La Harpe composed the following verses :

QUATRAIN POUR LE PORTRAIT DE LA REINE.

“ Le ciel mit dans ses traits cet éclat q̃u'on admire ;
France, il la couronna pour ta félicité :
Un sceptre est inutile avec tant de beauté ;
Mais à tant de vertus il fallait un empire.”

In one portrait I only did her to the knees, with an orange-coloured dress, seated before a table on which she was arranging flowers in a vase. As may be well believed, I preferred greatly to paint her without full toilette, and

above all without a large panier. These portraits were given to her friends or ambassadors. Amongst them was one in which she was represented dressed in a white muslin dress, with the sleeves folded back, but carefully arranged all the same ; when this was exhibited in the *salon*, wicked people did not fail to say that the Queen had been painted in her chemise ; for it was in 1786, and already calumnious reports, began to be circulated about her.

Nevertheless, this portrait had a great success. Towards the end of the exhibition a little play was got up at the Vaudeville, which was called, I believe, "The Reunion of Art." Brougniart, the architect, and his wife, who had been taken into the confidence of the author, engaged a box the day of the first representation and took me to the play. Having no idea of the surprise being prepared for me, my feelings may be imagined when I beheld this painting arrive, and saw the actress who acted the part copy me in a most wonderful manner painting the Queen's portrait. At the same time everyone arose from the boxes and stalls, and turned towards me with vehement applause. I do not believe it was possible for any human being to be more deeply touched and gratified than I was that evening.

The timidity which the first sight of the Queen inspired entirely ceased, owing to the gracious kindness she always showed me. As soon as Her Majesty heard I had a pretty voice, she rarely gave me a sitting without making me sing with her several of Grétry's duets, for she was very fond of music, although her voice was not always in tune. As for her demeanour, it would be difficult to describe its af-

fability and charm. I do not believe that Queen Marie Antoinette ever allowed an occasion to pass by without saying an agreeable thing to those who had the honour of approaching her, and the kindness which she always showed me is one of my most delightful souvenirs.

One day it so happened that I failed to appear at the time appointed for my sitting, because, owing to my health being very delicate at the time, I was taken suddenly ill.* I hastened the next day to Versailles to make my excuses. The Queen had not expected me, and was going out driving in her carriage, which was the first thing I perceived on entering the courtyard of the château. All the same I went up and spoke to the gentlemen-in-waiting. One of them, M. Campan,† received me very stiffly, and said angrily, in his stentorian voice : “It was yesterday, Madame, that Her Majesty expected you, and, of course, she is going driving, and, of course, she will not give you a sitting.” On my saying that I came merely to take Her Majesty’s orders for another day, he went to find the Queen, who immediately sent for me into her cabinet. She was finishing her toilette ; and held a book from which she was teaching her daughter, the young Madame. My heart beat fast, for I felt nervous, knowing I had been in the wrong. The Queen turned and said kindly, “I

* Madame Vigée Le Brun had a second daughter soon after, who died in her infancy.

† M. Campan was always talking of the Queen. One day he dined with me, and my daughter, then seven years old, whispered to me, “Mamma, is this gentleman the King?”—ED.

waited for you all yesterday morning; what happened to you?" "Alas! Madame," I replied, "I was so ill that I was unable to attend Your Majesty's commands. I come to-day to receive them and will leave directly." "No! no! do not leave," she rejoined, "I will not let you have your journey for nothing." She countermanded her carriage and gave me a sitting. I recollect that in my anxiety to make amends for her goodness, I seized my box of colours with such haste that I upset them all; my brushes and paints fell on the *parquet*, and I stooped down to collect them. "Let them alone, let them alone," said the Queen, "you are not in a condition to stoop;" and not heeding what I said, she bent down and picked everything up herself.

At the time of the last journey to Fontainebleau, as the Court, according to custom, had to be in full dress, I went there to behold the sight. The Queen was very magnificent, covered with diamonds, and as there was a bright sun to light her up, she appeared really dazzling. Her head being so beautifully set on her shoulders, gave her, when walking, such an imposing and majestic air that she might have been a goddess surrounded by her nymphs. During the first sitting I had with her, after her return from this journey, I mentioned what an impression the sight had had on me, and told the Queen how much the manner she had of holding her head added to the dignity of her carriage; she answered in a laughing way: "If I were not Queen they would say I looked insolent; is it not so?"

The Queen never neglected an opportunity of teaching

her children these gracious and affable manners which endeared her to all who had to do with her. I have seen her making Madame, then six years old, dine with a little peasant girl whom she protected, serving her first, and saying to her daughter: "You must do her the honours."

The last sitting I had from Her Majesty was at the Trianon, where I painted her head for the large picture in which I represented her with her children.

I remember the Baron de Breteuil, then Minister, was present the whole time, and never once ceased from speaking against all the Court ladies. He must have imagined I was deaf, or else peculiarly amiable, not to fear lest I should retail some of his ill-natured anecdotes to those most concerned in them. The truth is, I never repeated one, although I have not forgotten them at all.

After having finished the Queen's head, as well as separate studies for the first Dauphin, Madame Royale and the Duc de Normandie, I busied myself about my picture for I considered it of great importance, and I finished it for the *salon* of 1788. The frame having been taken there by itself, was sufficient to cause numerous evil speeches. "*Voilà le déficit*:" they said; and many other things were told to me, showing me that I should have some harsh criticisms. At last, I sent my painting, but I had not courage to follow it and know my fate, so much did I dread it would meet with a bad reception from the public. My fear was so great that it made me feverish; I shut myself in my room, and was there praying God for the success of *my* Royal Family, when my brother and a crowd of

friends came to tell me I had obtained universal approbation.

After the *salon* the King had the picture taken to Versailles. It was M. d'Angevilliers, then Minister of Arts and Director of the Royal Establishment who presented me to His Majesty. Louis XVI. had the goodness to talk some time with me, and to say he was much pleased. Then he added, again looking at my work : " I do not understand much about painting, but you make me love it."

My picture was placed in one of the saloons of the Château of Versailles, and the Queen always passed it in going and returning from mass. After the death of the Dauphin, the beginning of 1789, the sight of it recalled so vividly her sad loss that she could no longer traverse this saloon without weeping. She told M. d'Angevilliers to have the painting removed ; but with her habitual kindness had me at once informed of her reason for so doing. It is to this sensitiveness on the Queen's part that I owe the preservation of my work ; for the bandits and fish-women, who came shortly after to seek their Majesties at Versailles, would have certainly pierced it through and through, as they did the Queen's bed.

I never had the good fortune to see Marie Antoinette again, after the last ball at Versailles ; this ball was given in the theatre saloon, and the box where I was seated was near that of the Queen, so that I could hear what she said. I thought her very agitated, inviting some of the young men about the court, such as M. de Lameth, to dance with her, (his family had been treated with much favour by the Queen), and others also, who all refused ; so

that several of the quadrilles and dances could not be arranged at all. The behaviour of these gentlemen struck me as being most unbecoming ; I do not know why, but their refusal seemed to me to be a kind of evil omen, a prelude to graver ills. The revolution was very near ; it broke out the next year.

With the exception of Monsieur le Comte d'Artois, I painted all the Royal family in succession ; the children of France ; Monsieur, brother of the King, afterwards Louis XVIII. ; Madame, Madame la Comtesse d'Artois, and Madame Elizabeth. The features of the latter were not at all regular, but her face expressed a sweet disposition, and her complexion was wonderfully fresh ; she possessed the charm of a pretty milkmaid. You must not forget, dear friend, that Madame Elizabeth was an angel of goodness. How often have I seen her succouring the poor and afflicted ! Her heart was filled with kindness ; indulgent, modest, sensible and devoted, the revolution showed how heroic she was. We saw her, that lovely princess, walk in front of the cannibals who came to assassinate the Queen, saying, "They will take me for her !"

The portrait I made of Monsieur gave me an opportunity of knowing a prince whose wit and culture one could praise without flattery ; it was impossible not to be pleased with the conversational powers of Louis XVIII., he spoke on all subjects with taste and knowledge. Occasionally, though, he used to sing to me, during our sittings, to vary them no doubt, some songs which were not immoral exactly, but so vulgar that I could not imagine how such rubbish ever reached the Court. His voice was

never in tune. "How do you think I sing, Madame Le Brun?" he asked one day. "Like a prince, Monseigneur," I replied.

The Marquis de Montesquiou, equerry to Monsieur, sent a handsome carriage and six horses to take me to Versailles and back with my mother, whom I begged to accompany me. All the way, people ran to their windows to see me pass, and took off their hats to me; I laughed at the homage and respect paid to the six horses and outrider; for back in Paris I drove about in frys, and no one thought of looking at me then.

Monsieur was then what is called a liberal, in the moderate sense of the word; he and his followers formed a distinct party from the King's. So that I was not at all surprised to see, during the Revolution, that the Marquis de Montesquiou was appointed General-in-Command of the Republican forces in Savoy. I then recalled the strange conversations he had held before me, not to mention the tales which he openly related against the Queen and those who loved her; as for Monsieur, the newspapers told us how he went to the National Assembly and said, he did not come to sit there as a prince, but as a citizen. I do not believe though that that declaration would have sufficed to save his head, and he did well to leave France shortly afterwards.

At the same time I painted the Princesse de Lamballe. Without being pretty, she looked so at a little distance; she had small features, a brilliant complexion, splendid blonde hair, and an elegant figure. The horrible fate of this unfortunate Princess is well known, as well as the

devotion to which she fell a victim, for in 1793 she was safe from all danger at Turin, when she returned to France on hearing of the danger the Queen was in.

There ! I am a long way from 1779, dear friend ; but I preferred relating to you in one letter the dealings I had as artist with all these great people, of whom to-day none are left but the Count d'Artois, Charles X., and the unfortunate daughter of Marie Antoinette.

3





LETTER VI.

Voyage to Flanders—Brussels—Prince de Ligne—The painting of the Hôtel de Ville, Amsterdam, by Wanols—My reception at the Royal Academy of Painting—My Lodging—Society—My Concerts—Garat—Asevedo—Madame Todi—Viotti—Maestrino—Prince Henry of Prussia—Salentin—Hulmandel—Cramer—My suppers—I act in Society—Our Actors.



EAR friend, in 1782 M. Le Brun took me to Flanders, where he had some business to transact. There was then a sale at Brussels of the splendid collection of paintings of Prince Charles, and we went to see the exhibition. I met several of the court ladies there who greeted me most kindly, amongst them the Princess d'Aremberg whom I had seen in Paris ; but the meeting which pleased me most was with the Prince de Ligne,* whom I did not know before, and who has left, I may say, an historical reputation behind him

* Charles-Joseph, Prince de Ligne, Austrian General and French littérateur, was born at Brussels in 1735, and died at Vienna in 1814. He was a son of Prince Claude Lamoral de Ligne and Elizabeth de Salm-Salm. The Prince de Ligne left many printed and manuscript works. Madame de Staël said of the Prince de Ligne : " He is the only foreigner who, in French manners, has become a model instead of being an imitator."

for wit and amiability. He invited us to see his gallery, where I admired several master-pieces, principally portraits by Vandyck and heads by Rubens, for he had few Italian paintings. I remember his taking us to see his beautiful seat at Bel-œil ; we ascended a belvedere, built on the top of a hill which commanded a view over all his property and the country round. The delicious air and lovely view were most enchanting ; but everything was eclipsed in this charming place by the greeting and bearing of the master of the house, who for elegance of mind and manners has never had an equal.

The city of Brussels at that period was rich and animated. In the best society, for instance, people were so engrossed by pleasure that several friends of the Prince de Ligne left Brussels sometimes after their breakfast, arrived at the opera in Paris just in time to see the curtain rise, and when the play was over returned to Brussels, travelling hard all night ; that was considered being fond of the opera.

We left Brussels for Holland and the North. Sardam and Mars pleased me extremely ; these two little towns are so clean and well kept that I envied the inhabitants. The streets were very narrow, and being bordered by canals, carriages were not used, but people went on horseback, and employed little barques for the transport of merchandise. The houses, which were very low, had two doors ; one for birth, and one for death, which was only used for coffins. The roofs of these houses were as shining as though they were made of steel. The women in this part of Holland are very pretty, but very shy ; the

sight of a stranger made them fly. They were like that in those days; I suppose though that having French people sojourning in their country has made them less timid since.

We finished by visiting Amsterdam, and there I saw at the Hôtel de Ville the wonderful painting by Wanols, representing the Burgomasters Assembled. I do not believe there exists any painting more life-like or finer of its kind; it is so true to nature. The burgomasters are dressed in black: their heads, hands and draperies are wonderfully painted. The impression made on me by this painting is so vivid that I seem to see it even now.

We returned to Flanders to see the master-pieces of Rubens again. They were better placed then than they have been since in the Museum at Paris, for their effect in the old Flemish churches was beautiful. Other paintings by the same master adorned the amateurs' gallery; at Antwerp I discovered in a private collection the famous "Straw Hat" which was recently sold to an Englishman for a considerable sum of money. This wonderful painting represents one of Rubens's wives; its principal effect consists in the different lights given by the sun, daylight and the sun's rays. Perhaps only a painter can judge of its merits and wonderful execution. I was enchanted with this picture, and when I returned to Brussels I made a portrait of myself, and endeavoured to obtain the same effect. I wore on my head a straw hat, a feather and a garland of field flowers, and held in my hand a palette. When the portrait was exhibited in the *salon*, I may say that it added a good deal to my previous reputation. The

celebrated Muller engraved it; but the dark shadows of an engraving take away from the effect of such a painting.

Shortly after my return from Flanders in 1783, the portrait I have just told you about and several other of my works decided Joseph Vernet to propose me as a member of the Royal Academy of Painting. M. Pierre, then chief painter to the King, was strongly opposed to it, as he did not, he said, wish women to be received; and yet Madame Vallayer-Costa, who painted flowers most beautifully, had already been received, and I believe Madame Vien also.* However that may be, M. Pierre (a very second rate artist, for he only saw in painting the art of handling the brush) was a clever man; and besides he was rich, which gave him the means of receiving artists, who in those days were less fortunate than they are now. His opposition might have been fatal to me, if in those times all the true amateurs had not been associates of the Academy, and had they not formed, in my favour, a cabal against that of M. Pierre. It was at this time that the following epigram was made.

TO MADAME LE BRUN.

“Au Salon ton art vainqueur,
Devrait être en lumière.

* Madame Vigée Le Brun might have added more names to that of Madame Vien, namely:—1. Catherine Duchemin, flower painter. 2. Geneviève de Boulogne, flower painter. 3. Madeleine de Boulogne, flower painter. 4. Elisabeth-Sophie Cheron, (wife of Lehay), portrait painter. 5. Anne-Renée Strésor, miniature painter, and later on of religious history as well, and several others; fifteen in all were elected members at different times.

Pour te ravir cet honneur *
Lise il faut avoir le cœur
De Pierre ; de Pierre, de Pierre."

Finally I was admitted.† M. Pierre then spread about a report that it was through an order from the Court that I had been received. I really believe that the King and Queen had been good enough to wish me to enter the Academy, but that was all.

I gave for a presentation picture, "Peace returning and bringing Plenty with her," which is now in the "Ministère de l'Intérieur." It ought to have been returned to me, as I no longer belong to the Academy. I continued painting very hard, I had often three sittings in one day, and those after dinner tired me so much that I became thinner and thinner, owing to no longer being able to digest well. My friends got the doctor to order me to sleep every day after my dinner. At first it was difficult to accustom myself to this habit, but as I remained in my room with the shutters closed, sleep at last overtook me, and I am sure it is to this prescription that I owe my life. You know, dear friend, how much importance I ascribe to keeping calm. Being forced to work so hard, added to the fatigue of my long voyages, rendered it positively necessary ; the only objection I had to this siesta was, that it deprived me of the pleasure of dining in town, and as I devoted the whole morning to painting,

* Only members of the Academy had the right in those days to exhibit at the *Salon*.

† May 31st, 1783.

I never saw my friends until the evening. It is true that then I could do as I pleased, for I spent my evenings in the most delightful and brilliant society.

After my marriage I still lived in the Rue de Cléry, where M. Le Brun had a large suite of rooms, very richly furnished, in which he kept his paintings by the great masters. As for me, I was reduced to occupying a little ante-room and bed-room which served me as a sitting-room. This room was hung with the same material as my bed curtains. The furniture was extremely simple, too much so, perhaps, which however did not prevent M. de Champeenetz writing (his mother-in-law was jealous of me) that "Madame Le Brun had splendid hangings to her rooms, that she lighted her fire with bank notes, and only burnt aloe wood ;" but I will not tell you now, dear friend, any more of the calumnies of which I have been the victim ; we shall go back to them by and by. They are explained by my receiving every evening in these modest small apartments, which I have described, both courtiers and townsfolk ; great ladies, noblemen and men of mark in letters and art—all came to these rooms ; it was who would be present at my receptions, and often the marshals of France had to sit on the floor—I remember the Marshal de Noailles, who was very large and very old, had one night the greatest difficulty in getting up again.

I was far from imagining that all these great people came on my account ; as so often happens where open house is kept, some came to meet their friends, and others, the greater number, to enjoy the best music which was to be had in Paris. The celebrated composers, Grétry, Sac-

chini and Martini, often performed at my house portions of their works before the first representation. Our most constant singers were Garat, Asevedo, Richer, Madame Todi and my sister-in-law, who had a beautiful voice and could accompany anything by sight, which was very useful to us. I too sang occasionally, without much training it is true, for I had never the time for lessons, but my voice was agreeable ; the amiable Grétry said I had most silvery tones. However we must put aside all pretensions as to singing when one mentions those I have just named ; for Garat may be cited as one of the most extraordinarily talented men ever met with. Not only was there nothing too difficult for that flexible voice ; but for expression he had no rival, none ever sang Glück as well as he did—Madame Todi combined a superb voice with all the qualities of a great singer, and she sang serious and buffo parts equally well.

For instrumental music I had Viotti, the violinist, whose touch was exquisitely soft and delicate, Jarnovick,* Maestrino, and Prince Henry of Prussia, an excellent amateur who brought his first violin. Salentin played the hautboy, Hulmandel and Cramer the piano, Madame de Montgeron came once soon after her marriage. Although she was very young then, she astonished every one by her expression and execution.

The ladies who usually attended my concerts were the Marquise de Grollien, Madame de Verdun, Marquise de

* Jean-Marie Jarnovick, born at Palermo in 1745, died at St. Petersburg, November 21st, 1804.

Sabran who afterwards married the Chevalier de Boufflers, the Comtesse de Molay (all four great friends of mine) the Comtesse de Ségur, Marquise de Rongé, Madame de Pizé, her friend—I painted them together—and a host of other ladies whom I could not receive very often owing to the small space afforded by my rooms, and several distinguished foreigners. As for the men, it would take too long to name them, as I believe I entertained all of any note in Paris.

I selected the most amiable amongst these to invite to my supper parties, which were the most amusing in Paris, owing to the presence of the Abbé Delisle, the poet Le Brun, Chevalier de Boufflers, Vicomte de Ségur and many others, who were amongst my most favoured guests. No one can imagine what society was like in France in those days when, business being over, twelve or fifteen people would visit at different friends' houses and there finish the evening. The mirth and laughter which presided at these entertainments gave them a charm which mere dinners can never have—a friendliness and sociability reigned amongst the guests, restraint was laid aside and it was at the suppers that Parisian society showed its superiority over that of all Europe. At my house, for instance, people began to arrive at nine o'clock. Politics were never alluded to, but literature and the news of the day were the chief subjects of conversation. Sometimes we amused ourselves with acting charades, sometimes the Abbé Delisle or Le Brun-Pindare would recite some of their verses. At ten we sat down to table; my supper was a most simple repast. It was always composed of a fowl, a fish, a

dish of vegetables and a salad ; so that if I happened to have too many guests there was not always enough for all to eat. It was not of much consequence, we were gay, good tempered, and the hours passed like minutes; towards midnight all took their departure.

Not only did I have suppers at my own residence, but I frequently supped in Paris, for I could only dispose of my time in the evening. I enjoyed then taking some repose after my labours, in the form of cheerful distractions. Occasionally it was a ball, a ball where people were not crushed as they are now ; eight people were sufficient to form a quadrille, and the women who did not dance could at any rate watch the dancing, for the men stood upright behind them. Never having cared about dancing, I preferred the houses where music was the attraction. I often went to spend the evening with M. de Rivière who was chargé d'affaires, to the Court of Saxony, as he was distinguished both for his wit and moral qualities. His daughter, my sister-in-law, sang divinely, and made a good amateur actress. The eldest son of M. de Rivière was charming in comic parts ; I took the part of a soubrette in operas and comedies. Madame de Ruette, who had retired from the stage some years before, did not disdain joining our troupe. She acted in several operas with us, and her voice was still fresh and very lovely. My brother Vigée took the first parts very well ; in fact all our actors were excellent, except Talma. You will laugh at this, but the fact is that Talma, who acted the lovers' parts, was awkward, and embarrassed, and no one could have foreseen that he would become an inimitable actor. My sur-

prise was great I confess, when I beheld our *jeune premier* outdo Larive, and even Kain. But the time it took to work this metamorphosis, and all those of the same nature, proves to me that dramatic talent is one of the last to develop itself. If you take the trouble to look around, you will find that there never yet existed any actor who was great in his youth.

This is an immensely long letter, I have no space to tell you about a certain Greek supper which made a considerable sensation, so I must reserve that for another time.

Ever your friend.





LETTER VII.

The Greek Supper—Ménageot—M. de Calonne—Mademoiselle Arnault—Calumny—Madame de S. . . —Her Perfidy.



ERE, my dear friend, is an exact account of the most brilliant supper I ever gave.

One evening I had invited twelve or fifteen friends to hear a reading of the poet Le Brun ; whilst I was resting, before they arrived, my brother read me some pages of the Travels of Anacharsis. When he reached the part describing Greek dinners, and the different sauces and food they had, he said, "We ought to try some of those things to-night." I immediately spoke to my cook and told her what to do, and we decided she should make one sauce for the fowl, and another for the eels. As I was expecting some very pretty women, I thought we might all dress up in Greek costumes so as to create a surprise for M. de Vaudreuil and M. Boutin who we knew could not arrive before ten. My studio, full of the things with which I draped my models, provided me with several clothes, and the Comte de Parois, who lodged in my house, had a fine selection of Etruscan vases. He came to see me that day, as it happened ; I informed him of my project, and he brought me a quantity of vases to choose

from. I dusted them carefully and placed them on a mahogany table, laid without a cloth. I then placed a large screen behind the chairs, which I concealed by covering it here and there with a drapery, like that which is seen in some of Poussin's paintings. A hanging lamp threw a strong light on the table. At last everything was prepared, even my costumes; the first to arrive was a daughter of Joseph Vernet, the charming Madame Chalgrin. Immediately I dressed her hair and draped her, then came Madame de Verneuil, renowned for her beauty; Madame Vigée, my sister-in-law, who, without being pretty had the most lovely eyes; and there they were all three metamorphosed into *bona fide* Athenians. Le Brun-Pindare came in, we took off his powder, and undid his side curls, and on his head I placed a wreath of laurel with which I had painted young Prince Henry Lubomirski. I had represented him kneeling before a laurel bush and plaiting a crown. This painting has always remained in the family; the King of Poland told me, when at St. Petersburg, that never would they consent to part with it at any price, even to him. The Comte de Parois had a large purple mantle in which I draped my poet, and in a twinkling there was Pindare transformed into Anacreon. Then came the Marquis de Cubières. Whilst they went to his house for his guitar, which he had had mounted as a golden lyre, I costumed him also, as well as M. de Rivière (my sister-in-law's brother), Ginguené and Chaudet the famous sculptor.

It was getting late, I had not much time to think of myself; but as I always wore white tunic-shaped dresses,

now called blouses, I only needed a veil and crown of flowers on my head. I took great pains with my daughter, a charming child, and Mademoiselle de Bonneuil, now Madame Regnault d'Angély, who was very pretty. Both were most graceful to behold, bearing each an antique vase and waiting on us.

At half-past nine the preparations were over, and as soon as we were seated the effect of this arrangement was so novel and picturesque that we kept rising in turns in order to look at those who were seated.

At ten we heard the carriage of the Comte de Vaudreuil and de Boutin and when these two gentlemen entered the room, they found us singing the chorus from *Glück*, the God of Paphos and Guido, with M. de Cubières accompanying us on his lyre.

I never in my life saw two such astonished faces as those of M. de Vaudreuil and his companion. They were surprised and delighted, and could hardly tear themselves away from looking at us in order to sit down in the places reserved for them. Besides the two dishes I have mentioned, we had a cake made of honey and Corinthian grapes, and two plates of vegetables. We did indeed drink that evening a bottle of old Cyprian wine which I had had given me, but that was our only excess. We sat a long time at table, and Le Brun recited several odes to us. We all spent a most enjoyable evening.

M. Boutin and M. de Vaudreuil were so enthusiastic about it, that they spread it abroad the next day amongst their friends. Some Court ladies asked me for a second representation of this amusement, but I refused for several

reasons, and many of them were annoyed with me in consequence. Soon the rumour spread that this supper cost me twenty thousand francs. The King spoke angrily about it to the Marquis de Cubières, who luckily had been one of my guests, and was able to tell him how much it had been exaggerated.

Nevertheless what was rumoured at Versailles at twenty thousand francs, spread to Rome at forty thousand; at Vienna the Baronne de Strogonoff informed me I had spent sixty thousand on my supper, and at St. Petersburg, as you know, the sum remained at eighty thousand, whereas, to tell the truth, my Greek supper only cost me fifteen francs. The saddest part of all this was that these shameful stories were carried round Europe by my own compatriots, and this ridiculous calumny was not the only one with which my life was made unhappy; it is only too true that since I made my appearance in the world I have been a prey to malevolence and stupidity. One tale was that my works were not done by myself; M. Ménageot painted my pictures and even my portraits, although so many people could naturally bear witness to the contrary; this absurd report did not cease till I had been received at the Royal Academy of Painting. Then as I exhibited in the same *salon* as the author of *Méléagro*, the truth came out: for Ménageot, whose talent and counsels I fully appreciated, had a style of painting quite different from mine. His pictures are finely composed, and in a good historical style. This artist excelled in his draperies, and his Leonardo da Vinci, dying in the arms of Francis I. is very remarkable, but not equal to the *Méléagro* at the Gobelins.

M. Ménageot was very handsome, amiable, witty and sociable ; he was a great favourite in society.

Although I believe I was a most inoffensive person, I had enemies : not only amongst women, who disliked my not being as plain as they were, but some men could not forgive me for being the vogue, and getting more money for my paintings than they did. The result was many gossiping stories, one of which distressed me very much.

Shortly before the Revolution I made a portrait of M. de Calonne, and exhibited it at the *salon* of 1785 ; I had painted this Minister seated, a half length picture : which caused Mademoiselle Arnould to say, when she saw it : “Madame Le Brun has cut off his legs so that he may not run away.” Unfortunately this witty remark was not the only one to which my painting gave rise ; the most dreadful calumnies were invented about the picture. Some asserted that the Contrôler-General had given me a number of those bon-bons, called curl-papers, wrapped up in bank notes ; others that I had received in a paste a sum large enough to ruin the Exchequer. The truth was that M. de Calonne had sent me four thousand francs in a box valued at twenty louis ; several people are still alive who were present when I received it, and can certify to the truth of my statement. They were surprised at the smallness of the sum ; for shortly before M. de Beaujon, whom I had painted in the same way, sent me eight thousand francs (three hundred and twenty pounds) and no one found the price exorbitant, even then. The stone once set rolling, there were no end of evil disposed persons to keep it going. I was harassed with libels, accusing me of

having a secret liaison with M. de Calonne ; a man named Gorsas* whom I never knew or saw, and who was a violent Jacobite, deluged me with wicked lies.

The misfortune was that M. Le Brun who, against my wishes, had built a house in the Rue Gros-Chenet, gave by this means a pretext for calumny. Certainly we had both earned sufficient money to allow of this expense ; nevertheless, certain people asserted that M. de Calonne paid for the house. He would have paid for it very tardily ; for until my return from Russia in 1801, the payment was not quite finished, M. Le Brun having left this part of the business to me, to my great disgust. "You see," I frequently said to M. Le Brun, "what infamous stories they tell of me !" "Let them talk," he replied in just indignation, "when you die, I will erect a pyramid in my garden, and on it I will have engraved the list of your portraits ; they will know then what a fortune you have made." But I must own that this honour consoled me very slightly for my present annoyance. This annoyance was all the more keen, as no one more than myself could possibly fear becoming the object of degrading thoughts. I was so indifferent on the subject of money, that I scarcely knew its value ; the Comtesse de la Guiche, who is still alive, could affirm that having come to arrange the price of her portrait which she wished me to make, told me that she could not afford to pay more than a thousand crowns ; I replied that M. Le Brun, would not allow me to take

* Gorsas (Antoine-Joseph) was a political writer and was guillotined, October 7th, 1793.

less than a hundred louis. This defect of calculation I found very disadvantageous to me during my last journey to London ; I constantly forgot that guineas were worth more than a louis, and for my portraits (amongst others that of Madame Canning in 1803) I made my account as though I was in Paris.

All those who surrounded me knew that M. Le Brun took possession of all the money I earned, telling me that he required it for his business ; frequently I had only six francs in my purse. In 1788, when I made the portrait of the handsome Prince Lubomirski, then a youth, his aunt the Princesse Lubomirski sent me twelve thousand francs, and I begged M. Le Brun to let me have two louis ; but he refused, pretending that he had need of the entire sum to pay a debt. Besides this, M. Le Brun frequently appropriated money that was paid, and neglected to tell me that I had been paid. Once in my life, in the month of September, 1789, I received the price of a portrait ; it was that of the Bailly de Crussol, who sent me one hundred louis. Happily my husband being absent I was able to keep this sum, which a few days afterwards, on the 5th of October, enabled me to journey to Rome.

My indifference to money was no doubt caused by the small need I had to be rich. I lived very quietly, and spent little on my toilette ; I was often reproached with negligence on this point, for I wore generally nothing but white dresses, either muslin or linen, and I never wore full dress except for my *séances* at Versailles. My head-dress cost me nothing, I arranged my hair myself, and generally twisted round my head a muslin kerchief, as can be seen

in the portraits of myself which are in Florence, St. Petersburg and at Paris, at M. de Laborde's. In all my portraits I am painted thus, with one exception, which is at the Museum of the Louvre, where I am attired as a Greek.

Certes, it was not a woman of this kind who could gain the title of receiver-general of finances, and besides M. de Calonne had no attractions for me, for he wore a lawyer's wig! I always detested them, and judge then, with my love of the picturesque, how could I have accustomed myself to a wig! And I once refused a rich marriage because the gentleman wore one; and I had a great dislike to painting men who wore them.

The most surprising part of this affair, was that there had never been a shadow of truth in the calumny; I scarcely knew M. de Calonne. Once only in my life had I been in his house, on the occasion of his giving a grand soirée to Prince Henry of Prussia, and he had thought it proper to invite me; also I recollect having finished his portrait in so much haste that I did not copy his hands, which I was always in the habit of doing from my models. I should therefore never have imagined from what source these malignant stories could have arisen, had I not discovered afterwards a most perfidious action worthy of the lower regions.

M. de Calonne frequently visited in the Rue Gros-Chenet (before I had a house there) a certain Madame de S——, wife of D——, surnamed the Roué. Madame de S—— had a charming sweet face, though one might perceive something deceitful in her expression, and M. de Calonne was very much in love with her. At the time of which I speak

she had begged me to take her portrait, and one day when she was having a sitting, she asked me in her usual sweet manner if I would lend her my carriage that evening to take her to the theatre ; I consented, and my coachman drove to her house to take her. The next morning I wanted my horses for eleven o'clock ; but neither coachman or carriage had returned. I sent at once a messenger to Madame de S——. Madame de S—— had not returned ; she had passed the night at the Hôtel des Finances ! Imagine my indignation when I heard this some days afterwards from my coachman, who also related it to several persons in my house. In thinking, that if the people at the Hôtel des Finances had asked whose carriage it was, this man would have naturally replied that it belonged to Madame Le Brun, I was almost beside myself with rage. It is useless to add that I never saw any more of Madame de S——, who I am told lives at Toulouse, and has become extremely pious and devout. May God forgive her ! Did she want to save her reputation at the expense of mine ? Did she hate me ? I do not know : but she did me a great injury, for the long details on which I have entered, dear friend, will sufficiently prove to you how I have suffered from a calumny which was so inconsistent with my character and the conduct of my whole life, which I venture to say has always been honourable.

This is a sad letter, enough to disgust one with celebrity, above all when one has the misfortune to be a woman. A gentleman said to me one day : "When I look at you, and think of your renown, I seem to see rays of glory round your head." "Ah !" I replied,

sighing, there are many little serpents in rays of that kind."

In fact, is there ever a great reputation made that does not excite envy? It is true that it draws to you all your most distinguished contemporaries, and this society is a great consolation. When I think of the many amiable kind people whose acquaintance and friendship I owe to my art, I am happy that my name is known; and to conclude in one word, dear friend, when I think of you I forget the scandal-mongers.

Adieu.





LETTER VIII.

Le Kain—Brizard—Mademoiselle Dumesnil—Monvel—Mademoiselle Rancourt—Mademoiselle Sainval—Madame Vestris—Larive—Clairon—Talma—Préville Dugazon—Mademoiselle Mars—Madame St. Huberti—The Two Vestris—Cailleau.



My greatest recreation was going to the theatre, and I can assure you that at the time of which I write the actors were so admirable that they have never been excelled. I perfectly recollect having seen the celebrated Le Kain act, though I was too young to appreciate his great talent ; the applause and spontaneous enthusiasm which he excited proved to me even then what a splendid tragedian he was. The astonishing ugliness of Le Kain was not noticed in certain parts. A chevalier's costume for example softened the harsh and repulsive expression of a face the features of which were irregular, so that one could watch him when he played *Tancréd* ; but in the rôle of *Orosmane*, in which I once saw him, the turban made him so hideous that though I admired his noble acting, he positively made me afraid. At the time when Le Kain played his first parts, and even some years later, I saw Brizard and Mademoiselle Dumesnil. Brizard took the parts of the "fathers," and nature

seemed to have fitted him for this employment ; his white hair, imposing stature, and his superb voice, gave him the most noble and respectable appearance imaginable. He excelled most in King Lear, and in the *Œdipus* of Ducis. You would really have thought you saw these unfortunate princes, so grand was the aspect of the man who represented them.

Mademoiselle Dumesnil, though small and very plain, excited the greatest enthusiasm in the tragic parts. Her talent, however, was uncertain ; she fell sometimes into trivialities, but she had also sublime moments. In general, she expressed passion better than tenderness, unless it was maternal, for one of her best parts was *Mérope*. It sometimes happened that Mademoiselle Dumesnil in playing a part of the piece produced no effect on her audience ; suddenly she would become animated, and then her manner, her voice, her look, all became so eminently tragical, that she carried the whole house with her. I am told that before appearing on the stage, she always drank a bottle of wine, and had one in reserve behind the scenes.

One of the most remarkable actors at the Théâtre Français in tragedy and high comedy was Monvel. Some physical disadvantages, and a weak voice, precluded him from taking a first place ; but his spirit, his enthusiasm, and above all the correctness of his diction left nothing to be desired. On my return to Paris, he had quitted the rôle of *jeunes premiers* for that of *pères nobles*. I saw him play Augustus of Cinna and l'Abbé de l'Épée in an admirable manner ; in this last piece he was so perfectly natural, that once on leaving the scene he bowed to the actors of

the piece; I rose and returned his bow, which greatly amused the friends I was with.

The most brilliant débüt which I remember and have seen, was that of Mademoiselle Rancourt in the rôle of Dido. She was not more than eighteen or twenty years of age. The beauty of her face, figure, voice and diction all promised a perfect actress; joined to all her other advantages, she had a remarkably modest manner and an unblemished reputation, which made her much sought after by all the great ladies of Paris. They gave her jewellery, costumes for the theatre, and money for herself and father whom she never left; they say that the happy mortal who first triumphed over so many virtues was the Marquis de Bièvre, and that when she left him for another lover, he cried: "Ah! l'ingrate à ma rente!" Mademoiselle Rancourt always remained a great tragedian, but her voice became so harsh and hard, that when not looking at her you might have imagined you heard a man. She acted at the theatre until her death, playing the parts of mothers and queens with infinite success.

I have also witnessed the acting of the Mesdemoiselles Sainval, and Madame Vestris, the sister of Dugazon. The two first named wept too frequently; but they seemed to me to be superior as tragedians to Madame Vestris, who, beautiful though she was, never obtained any great success, unless in the rôle of Gabrielle de Vergy, where the effect she produced in the last act was heart-breaking; it must also be added that this scene was horrible.

Larive who, unfortunately for himself, succeeded Le Kain, the recollection of whom had not died, had more

talent than the old theatre goers gave him credit for ; it was the comparison between himself and Le Kain which was injurious to him, for he lacked neither in energy or noble bearing. He was handsome, tall, well made, but he was never easy in his gait, which made people say he walked on one side of himself.

Larive had very good manners, and conversed with much spirit, even on subjects not connected with his profession, so much so that he always mixed in good society.

My brother introduced him to me, and as I knew Larive to be intimately acquainted with Mademoiselle Clairon, I expressed to him my great desire to know this grand tragedian, whom I had not seen act. He immediately invited me to dine with him, in order to meet her, and I accepted at once. Two days afterwards I went to his house in the Gros-Caillou, which was very charming and arranged with perfect taste, besides possessing a lovely garden, which, though in Paris, seemed like the country. Larive showed me his arbours under the climbing vine as you see them in the environs of Naples, and just as we entered the dining-room Mademoiselle Clairon was announced. I had pictured to myself that she was very tall ; but on the contrary she was short and very thin, and held her head very erect, which gave her a dignified air. I never heard anyone speak with so much emphasis, for she retained her tragic tone and airs of a princess ; but she struck me as being clever and well informed. I sat beside her at table and enjoyed much of her conversation. Larive showed her the greatest respect and attention.

On my return to France, I was delighted to meet Larrive again, whilst on a visit to the Marquise de Groslier at Epinay. He had retired from the theatre, and lived at a charming country-seat in the neighbourhood. He frequently visited Madame de Groslier, and entertained us by reading aloud ; the manner in which he recited poetry was perfect, added to which his voice was splendid.

Talma, our last great tragic actor, surpassed to my mind all the others. There was genius in his acting. One may also say that he revolutionised art : in the first place by his true and pure diction, and next in insisting on an innovation in the costumes, attiring himself as a Greek or Roman, as the case might be, to play Achilles or Brutus, for which I felt deeply obliged to him. Talma had a splendid head and the most expressive face, and no matter to what lengths the fire of his acting carried him, he was always dignified, which to me appears one of the first qualities in a tragic actor. His voice was sometimes a little hollow ; and was most suitable to express rage or profound emotion ; he shone most in the rôles of Oreste and Manlius ; but in all he was generally sublime. The last rôle which he created has never been played by any one since. No one, I believe, would have ventured to act it, for Talma was in this piece superior even to himself ; he was no longer an actor, but Charles VI. in person, an unfortunate king and madman, in his fearfully true delineation. Alas ! death speedily followed this triumph ; and what Paris applauded so vehemently, was but the song of the swan.

Talma was an excellent man, and one of the easiest to get on with that could be possibly met. He did not appear

to care much about shining in society; to draw him out it was necessary that the conversation should touch on anything which interested his heart and mind ; then he became very interesting to listen to, especially when he conversed on his art.

Comedy at this time was perhaps even richer in talent than tragedy. I often had the pleasure of seeing Prévile act. It was delightful and inimitable ! His style was so natural, sparkling and gay ! No matter what he played, whether Crispin, Sosie, Figaro, you would not have recognised him to be the same man, he had so many different ways of acting comic parts ; he was so true to nature, that all who have tried to imitate him have only shown how indifferent they were. I do not except Dugazon, for he possessed much talent certainly, but in Figaro, for example, he fell far short of his model.

I often dined with Prévile ; he was a most amiable host ; his wit and gaiety charmed every one. Dugazon, his successor in comic parts, would have made an excellent comedian had he not been possessed with the desire of always making the public laugh, which often became quite a farce. He played certain parts perfectly ; that of a valet for instance. His conduct during the Revolution was atrocious ; he was one of those who brought back the King from Varennes; an eye-witness told me he saw him at the door of the carriage, his gun on his shoulder. Remember that this man had been most kindly treated by the Court, and principally so by the Comte d'Artois.

I remember seeing Mademoiselle Doligny in the rôle of *jeune première* which she acted beautifully. She was so

natural, clever and good, that one forgot how ugly she was. I was present at the first appearance of Mademoiselle Contat. She was very pretty and well made, but acted so badly at first that no one could have foreseen she would become such an excellent actress.

At the time that all these great actors of whom I am telling you began to grow old, there arose amongst them a young genius who is now the ornament of the French stage. Mademoiselle Mars then acted in the more simple parts most inimitably ; she excelled as Victorine in the "Philosophe sans le savoir," and in twenty parts in which she has never been equalled, she was so thoroughly natural and true. When you saw Mademoiselle Mars, dear friend, she had already begun to replace Mademoiselle Contat. You must remember her pretty face, figure, and her voice, that angel's voice ! fortunately that face, figure and voice are so well preserved that Mademoiselle Mars has no age, and will, I am sure, never be old ; every evening the delight of the public shows they are of my opinion.

Another very talented actress was Madame St. Huberti ; the beautiful and impressive music of Piccini, Sacchini, and Glück just suited her superb voice, and in the roles of Alcestes and Didon she was most affecting. She was not pretty but had an expressive countenance ; the Comte d'Entraigues, a very handsome, distinguished man fell so much in love with her that he married her. The Revolution having broken out they took refuge in London, and it was there, while going out one evening, that both were assassinated ; no motive was ever found for the dreadful act, neither was any trace discovered of the assassins.

Gardel and Vestris senior were first in the ballet. I often saw them dance together, especially in a chaconne,* which happens in Grétry's operas, a chaconne which I believe set all Paris jumping : it was a *pas de deux*, in which the two leading men pursued Mademoiselle Guimard, who was very small and thin, which caused people to compare them to two dogs disputing over a bone. I always considered Gardel very inferior to the old Vestris, who was a large handsome man, and perfect in a slow stately dance. I cannot describe how gracefully he took off and put on his hat in the bow preceding the minuet ; all the young Court ladies took lessons of him before their presentation in making the three bows.

The elder Vestris was succeeded by his son, who was the most wonderful dancer for grace and lightness ever known ; although our dancers are not sparing of twists and pirouettes, no one will make as many as he did ; he used to spring into the air with such bounds that he might have had wings, which caused his father to say : " If my son touches the ground sometimes, it is only out of a kind regard for his comrades."

One of the most beloved actors was Cailleau, he left the stage when I was still very young, but I saw him act twice in "Annette and Lubin." His handsome face and gay animated manner, combined with his beautiful voice, will always be remembered by me, even had I not had the pleasure of acting with him in private. At the time of his great successes he met with a slight accident to his throat

* A Chaconne is an old French dance.

whilst on the stage, an event which often happens to singers ; a hiss went round the theatre, and Cailleau was so offended that he left it that same evening, and no one could persuade him to play before the public again.

When the Revolution broke out he was much suspected, as he had received many kindnesses from the Comte d'Artois. I was told, but I will not believe it, that he proved ungrateful, and played the part of a Jacobin. If it is true, I am convinced that the fear of his wife turned his head. I have good reasons for believing that she was a Republican ; in 1791 I received in Rome a letter from her imploring me to return to France, saying that we should be all equal, and it would be a *golden age*. Happily I did not believe her, for what an age of gold succeeded ! Shortly after getting this letter, I heard Madame Cailleau had thrown herself out of a window in a fit of despair.

And now I come to her whose dramatic career I have followed from beginning to end, to the most perfect actress ever possessed by the Opéra Comique, to Madame Dugazon. She had a natural talent which owed nothing, apparently, to study. Noble, naïve, graceful and piquant, she had twenty faces, and always suited her accent to the person she represented at the time ; her voice was rather weak, but it did for tears, laughter, and every situation equally well. Grétry and Delagrac worked for her, and were wild about her, and so was I also.

Madame Dugazon was a Royalist to the core, and gave a strong proof of that to the public at an advanced period of the Revolution. One evening as she was acting the

soubrette in the "Événements Imprévus," the Queen attended the representation, and in a duet where the valet begins by saying : " I love my master tenderly," Madame Dugazon, who had to reply : " Ah ! how I love my mistress," turned towards the Queen's box, put her hand on her heart, and sang her reply in a feeling voice, bowing to the Queen. I have been told that later on the public—and what a public ! wished to be revenged on her for this noble act, and endeavoured to make her sing some horrible song, which they delighted in, on the stage ; Madame Dugazon would not yield, but left the theatre.

The length of this letter will show you, dear friend, how much I liked acting, for I have spared you few details.

Adieu.





LETTER IX.

Chantilly—Le Raincy—Madame de Montesson—The old Princess de Conti—Gennevilliers—Our Plays—The Marriage of Figaro—Beaumarchais—Monsieur and Madame de Villette—Moulin Joli—Watelet—M. de Morfontaine—The Marquis de Montesquiou—My Horoscope.



O my great regret, I was unable to remain long in the country ; but I often spent two or three days there at a time, and I had invitations to all the most beautiful places round Paris. I saw the Chantilly fêtes, organised by the Prince de Condé, who afterwards returned to France with Louis XVIII., and who knew so well how to do the honours of those entertainments. You know the beautiful Château at Chantilly ; the long gallery was adorned with armour of different epochs, some of it so heavy and large that it might have done for giants ; it was a splendid decoration for the abode of the descendants of the great Condé. At the end of the gallery was the cast of Henry IV., taken from his face after his death, to which still adhered some of the hair belonging to the eyebrows of the great King. I do not know what has become of this mask, which has been often reproduced in plaster ; the armoury was pillaged in

the Revolution, and a good deal of it found its way into museums.

In 1782, I stayed some time at Raincy. The Duc d'Orléans, father of Philippe Egalité, who then lived there, invited me to take his portrait and that of Madame de Montesson. With the exception of the large hunts which I enjoyed watching, I felt rather bored at Raincy ; my sittings over, I had no congenial society except that of Madame Bertholet, a very pleasant woman, who played well on the harp. Saint-Georges, the mulatto, was also amongst the sportsmen. I better understood, when there, the love most men, and especially princes, have for hunting ; this amusement, when several people are congregated, makes a fine spectacle.

Whilst mentioning this visit, I cannot recall now without laughing a peculiarity of those days which at the time shocked me ; whilst Madame de Montesson gave me a sitting, the old Princesse de Conti came one day to visit her, and this Princess, in speaking to me, called me always Miss. I was then expecting the birth of my daughter, which rendered this term still more curious. It is true that formerly all the great ladies spoke so to their inferiors, but this fashion had ceased with Louis XV.

If I did not enjoy my stay at Raincy much, I did when I was at Gennevilliers, which made up for it ; this place then belonged to M. le Comte de Vaudreuil, a most charming person.

It was not a pretty place, and had been bought on account of the Comte d'Artois, because of there being plenty of hunting near, and M. de Vaudreuil had embel-

lished it wonderfully. The house was tastefully furnished, but without magnificence ; there was a small theatre also, in which my sister-in-law's brother, M. de Rivière, and myself often acted comic operettas, along with Madame Dugazon, Garat, Cailleau, and Laruelle. These two last had retired from the stage, but were admirable actors, and so natural, that when they were repeating the scene of the two fathers in "Rose and Colas," I believed they were talking together, and said : "Come, do begin the rehearsal."

M. le Comte d'Artois and his friends assisted at our plays. I confess that the sight of these great people made me very nervous, so that I refused to act the first time they came, but was persuaded to go on with my part through fear of disobliging my friends.

The last play acted in the theatre at Gennevilliers was a representation of the "Marriage de Figaro," by the actors from the Comédie Française. I remember that Mademoiselle Sainval was the countess and Mademoiselle Olivier the page ; Beaumarchais must have worried M. de Vaudreuil into permitting such a very doubtful play to be performed in this theatre. The dialogues, couplets, all were against the Court, of which most of the audience was composed, not to speak of the presence of our excellent Prince.

Every one felt this want of tact ; but Beaumarchais was wild with delight. He rushed about like a madman, and on some one complaining of the heat, he did not give time for the windows to be opened, but broke all the panes with his cane, which annoyed everyone still more.

The Comte de Vaudreuil must have repented having accorded his protection to the author of the "Marriage de Figaro." In fact, shortly after this representation Beaumarchais requested an audience, which he obtained at once, and he came to Versailles at such an early hour that the Count was barely out of bed. He then began to speak of some financial project which he had conceived, and which he said would work wonders; and then he wound up by proposing to give M. de Vaudreuil a considerable sum if he would undertake the guidance of the affair. "Monsieur de Beaumarchais," he replied, "you could not have arrived at a luckier time; for I have passed a good night, I have digested well, and never felt better in my life; had you come to me yesterday with such a proposition I should have thrown you out of the window."

One of the prettiest country seats I have seen was Villette. The Marquise de Villette, surnamed Good and Beautiful, having begged me to go and visit them, I spent some days at that place; we came upon a man one day who was painting some railings in the lovely park, he was so expeditious that M. de Villette complimented him on it. "As for me," he replied, "I would undertake to efface in a day all that Rubens painted in his life."

Madame de Villette received very gracefully, and did well the honours of her house; she was very benevolent, and had a circular building in her park, where I was informed she collected the young village girls and instructed them just like a schoolmaster.

Ah! dear friend, how much I should have enjoyed walking with you in the woods of Moulin Joli which be-

longed to one of my acquaintances, a M. Watelet, a great friend of art and author of a poem on painting. M. Watelet was a distinguished man, with a kind disposition, which made him many friends. In his lonely retreat he seemed in harmony with all his surroundings ; he entertained with ease and simplicity, and had a small but select circle of friends. He had living with him a friend to whom he had been attached for thirty years : time had hallowed their union, so to speak, so that they were received together in the best company, as well as the lady's husband, who strangely enough, never left her.

Monsieur de Calonne, who gave me so many things, as you know, was also supposed to have given me Moulin Joli. Ah ! had I possessed it I should, I believe, never have quitted it. My greatest regret, on the contrary, is that I did not buy it when on my return to France I found it was for sale : but a delay in the remittance of my money from Russia prevented my doing so. Moulin Joli was then sold for eighty thousand francs to a charcoal burner, who cut down all the trees and recouped himself thereby for the expense.

Some time before the Revolution I went to Morfontaine, and from thence we made an excursion to Ermonville, where I saw the tomb of J. J. Rousseau. The notoriety of this fine park spoilt the excursion for me ; at each turn so many inscriptions are noticed, that all one's ideas are destroyed.

M. de Morfontaine received with so much kindness and simplicity that everyone seemed at their ease with him. The Comte de Vaudreuil, Le Brun (the poet), the Cheva-

lier de Coigny, Brongniart, Robert Rivière and my brother acted charades every evening, and kept waking each other up to tell them ; this mirth shows how much liberty was permitted in that place. In real truth, order was as much banished as restraint. Fortunately we were all intimate, and not a large party, for I never saw a château worse kept. At this time M. Le Pelletier de Morfontaine was provost of merchants ; he built one of the bridges at Paris, I know not which one. I remember he often carried in a small packet a little slate, on which he wrote whatever he thought funny to remember to say to people. I often tried to read it over his shoulder, but although his letters were very big, I never could make out a word—his writing was so unformed ; I defy his inheritors ever to participate in any souvenirs he may have left.

On leaving Morfontaine for Maupertuis, one could not help comparing the difference between these two fine houses. At Maupertuis all was order and magnificence. M. de Montesquiou kept up all the state of a great personage. As he was equerry to Monsieur and had been so since the death of Louis XV., it was easy for him to put carriages and horses at our disposal.

The mother and wife of M. de Montesquiou were very good to me. His sister-in-law, who afterwards became governess to the son of Napoleon, was kind, natural and very amiable. As for him, I have often seen him at Paris, and he struck me as being witty but cold ; at Maupertuis he was not like the same man ; when we were alone he read to us of an evening most charmingly.

I remember one evening when we were rather a small

party, the Marquis de Montesquieu told us our fortunes. He foretold me that I should live long, and be an amiable old lady because I was not a coquette. Now I have lived a long time, but am I an amiable old lady? I doubt it; but at least I am a loving one, for I love you dearly.

Adieu.





LETTER X.

The Duc de Nivernais—The Maréchal de Noailles—His Speech to Louis XV.—Madame du Barri—Louveciennes—The Duc de Brissac—His Death—Death of Madame du Barri.



EAR Friend, I dined several times at Saint-Ouen with the Duc de Nivernais, who had a fine place there, and who entertained a great deal. He was always renowned for the ease of his manner, and was distinguished by his extreme politeness towards women of all ages. It is very difficult now-a-days to give any idea of the urbanity and graceful ease of the manners of forty years ago, which then were the great charm of Parisian society. This politeness of which I speak has totally disappeared. Women reigned then, the Revolution dethroned them.

The Duc de Nivernais was small and very thin. Although very old when I knew him, he was still full of vivacity. He was passionately fond of poetry, and made some very good verses.*

* Louis-Jules-Barbon-Mancini Mazarini, Duc de Nivernais, died at the age of eighty-two. He succeeded Massillon at the Académie Française, and shortly after became a Member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Literature.

I dined often with the Maréchal de Noailles in his lovely château at the entrance to Saint Germain. He was very pleasant ; his wit and gaiety communicated itself to all his guests, whom he selected from amongst the most distinguished literary characters and court celebrities.

The Maréchal de Noailles had an original and very piquant mind. He rarely resisted a desire to say something cutting ; it was he who replied to Louis XV., when eating some olives out hunting, which he found bad : “They are from the bottom of the cask, Sire, no doubt.”

This speech carries me back to a woman of whom I have not yet spoken, a woman who, though belonging to the lowest ranks of society, passed through a king’s palace, and from thence to the scaffold, and whose sad end makes one forgive the scandal attached to her life.

It was in 1786 that I went for the first time to Louveciennes, where I had promised to take the portrait of Madame du Barri. I was extremely curious to see this favourite of whom I had so often heard. Madame du Barri must then have been about forty-five, she was tall, but not too much so, stout, with a full but beautiful figure ; her face was still charming, with regular and pleasing features ; her hair was fair and curly, like a child’s ; her complexion was the only part which was becoming withered.

She received me very gracefully, and seemed to me to have good manners, but I found her mind more natural than her manners ; her glances were those of a coquette, for her long eyes were never opened wide, and her pronunciation was childish, and did not agree well with her age. She gave me an apartment behind the weir at Marly,

whose dismal noise worried me dreadfully. Underneath my apartment was a gallery, in which were placed, without any sort of order, busts, vases, columns, the rarest and most precious marbles, and quantities of other rare and valuable objects, all massed together in confusion, so that one might have believed oneself in the house of the mistress of several sovereigns, who had all enriched her with their gifts. These remains of magnificence contrasted strangely with the simplicity adopted by the mistress of the house, both in her toilette and manner of living.

In summer as in winter Madame du Barri wore only white muslin or percale dressing-gowns, and every day, no matter what the weather was like, she walked in her park or outside without feeling any ill effects, so much strengthened was she by her country life. She did not keep up any intercourse with the large court which had for so long surrounded her ; the Portuguese Ambassadors, the beautiful Madame de Souza, and the Marquise de Brunoy were, I believe, the only women she saw, and during my three visits to her, at different times, I was able to satisfy myself that few people troubled her solitude.

I often met M. de Monville there, an amiable and very elegant person, who took us into a place called the desert, where the house only consisted of a tower. I do not know why the Ambassadors of Tippoo Saib considered themselves obliged to visit the former mistress of Louis XV. Not only did they come to Louveciennes, but they brought presents to Madame du Barri, among others richly embroidered muslins. She gave me a splendid one with

large detached flowers, in which both gold and colours were admirably blended.

In the evenings we were often alone, seated by the fire, Madame du Barri and myself. She often talked to me about Louis XV. and his court, always with the greatest respect for the one and very cautiously about the other. But she avoided all details; it was evident that she preferred not to mention this subject, so that as a rule her conversation was rather flat. Otherwise she was a good woman both in words and action; she was very benevolent and succoured all the poor at Louveciennes. We often went together and visited some poor person, and I remember even now how justly angry she was when at the bedside of a woman who had a baby and was in great want.

"What!" said Madame du Barri, you have neither had linen, wine, or soup?" "Alas! nothing, Madame." As soon as we had returned to the château, Madame du Barri ordered up her housekeeper and the other servants who had not done what she had ordered; she was extremely angry with them and made them arrange a parcel of linen in her presence, and take it at once to the poor woman with some broth and Bordeaux wine.

Every day we took our coffee after dinner in the Pavilion, so renowned for the taste and richness of its ornamentation. The first time I saw it, Madame du Barri said: "It was in this saloon that Louis XV. did me the honour to dine; above it there was a tribune for the musicians and singers who played and sang during the repast." It was a delightful saloon; the view was splendid, and the chimney-pieces and doors were of the most elaborate

workmanship ; the locks were master-pieces in their way, and the furniture was of a richness and elegance beyond description.

It was no longer Louis XV. who reclined on the magnificent couches, it was the Duc de Brissac, and we have often left him there, for he was fond of his siesta. The Duc de Brissac lived altogether at Louveciennes ; but nothing, either in his manners or those of Madame du Barri would have caused anyone to suppose that he was more than the friend of the mistress of the house. It was easy to see though that a tender affection united these two, and perhaps this attachment cost them their lives. When, before the Terror, Madame du Barri went to England to seek for her stolen diamonds, which she found there, the English had received her cordially and did their utmost to prevent her returning to France ; in fact at the last her friends unharnessed her post-horses to make her stay ; it was only her desire to join the Duc de Brissac who she had left concealed at Louveciennes, which made her resist the instances of her friends to keep her in London, where she might have lived in ease from the sale of her diamonds. Unfortunately for her she quitted England, and rejoined the Duc de Brissac at Louveciennes. Shortly after, the duke was arrested before her eyes, and taken to prison at Orleans. From thence they fetched him and three others, to lead to Versailles, as they said ; all four were put in a tumbril and had barely got half way there when they were shamefully massacred !

The bleeding head of the Duc de Brissac was carried to Madame du Barri. You can imagine what that unhappy

woman must have felt at the sight ! It was not long before she experienced the same fate, reserved for everybody who possessed any fortune or a great name. She was betrayed and denounced by a little negro, called Zamore, of whom mention is made in the memoirs of those times, as having been most kindly treated both by her and by Louis XV. Arrested and imprisoned, Madame du Barri was judged and condemned to death by the revolutionary tribunal at the end of 1793. She is the only woman, amongst the numbers of women who perished in those days, who was unable to face the scaffold ; she wept, she implored mercy from the horrible crowd which surrounded her, and that crowd was so affected by her entreaties that the executioner hastened to put an end to her agony, I am convinced that had the victims of that awful time not died so courageously, the Terror would have ceased much sooner. Men whose intellects are not fully developed have too little imagination to feel touched by internal suffering, and the pity of the populace is more easily aroused than its admiration.

I made three portraits of Madame du Barri. In the first place I represented her in a peignoir, with a straw hat ; in the second she is robed in white satin, holding a crown in one hand and with one arm resting on a pedestal. I painted this picture very carefully ; it was destined for the Duc de Brissac, as was the other also, and I have seen it recently. The old general to whom it belonged had the head touched up, for it is not like the one I did ; this one is rouged up to the eyes, and Madame du Barri never wore any at all. I renounce therefore any connection with this

head, which is not mine ; the rest of the painting is intact and well preserved. It was sold at the death of the above mentioned general.

The third portrait I made of Madame du Barri is in my own house ; I commenced it towards the end of 1789. We heard continual cannonading at Louveciennes, and I remember the poor woman saying : "Had Louis XV. been alive, surely this would not have happened." I had painted the head and traced out the bust and arms, when I was obliged to return to Paris ; I hoped to be able to go back again to Louveciennes and finish my work ; but Berthier and Foulon had just been assassinated. My terror was very great and I only thought of how to leave France ; I therefore left this picture unfinished. I do not know by what chance M. le Comte Louis de Narbonne became the possessor during my absence ; on my return to France he restored it to me, and I have just completed it.*

The sad contents of this letter warn me that I have arrived at a period of my existence of which I could wish to lose all knowledge and all memory, had I not promised you a sincere and complete recital of my life ; no more gaiety, Greek suppers, or comedies, but days of anguish and fear, which I shall relate in my next letters.

Adieu, dear friend.

* We do not know the name of the present proprietor of this portrait, but we know that Madame Tripier Le Franc has made a very beautiful copy.



LETTER XI.

Romainville—Maréchal de Ségur—Malmaison—Madame le Couteux—
du-Moley—Abbé Sièyes—Madame Auguier—Madame Campan—
Madame Rousseau—The first Dauphin.



I CANNOT recall the last visits I made without some unpleasant memories mingling with those of happier moments : in 1788, for instance, I went with Robert to spend a few days at Romainville, with the Maréchal de Ségur. During our journey we noticed that the peasants no longer took off their hats, on the contrary, they looked sullenly at us, and some even menaced us with their sticks. When we reached our destination we were witnesses of a most terrible storm. The sky was yellow, tinted with dark grey, and when these fearful clouds broke there burst forth sheets of lightning, and heavy thunder, accompanied by such enormous hail stones, that the environs of Paris were ravaged for forty leagues round. Madame de Ségur and myself gazed at each other with shuddering during this storm ; we seemed to foresee that gloomy day, the evils of which without being a fortune-teller one could easily have foretold.

The evening and the next day we all went with the Maréchal to behold the ravages made by the storm. Wheat, vines and fruit trees had been completely destroyed.

The peasants were weeping and wringing their hands. Everyone did their utmost to succour these unfortunate creatures ; the larger landowners gave away sums of money—one very rich man distributed forty thousand francs amongst the sufferers ; to the shame of humanity, be it said, that he was one of the first who were massacred by the bloodthirsty revolutionists.

I spent a fortnight at Malmaison during that summer of 1788 ; it then belonged to the Comtesse du Moley, a pretty fashionable woman not particularly clever herself, but who appreciated wit in others. Comte Olivarès was living with her at the time, and she had had an inscription placed for him at the beginning of a road, leading to the top of the park, with “Sierra Morena” written on it. Olivarès was not exactly a pleasant person. The most striking thing about him was his dirt ; his pockets were full of Spanish tobacco, and he used them instead of a snuff-box.

The Duc de Crillon and dear Abbé Delille came often to Malmaison. Madame du Moley was very fond of solitary walks, and my taste agreed with hers ; so that we had arranged that we would carry a branch of green stuff in our hands if we did not wish to speak to each other, or to meet. I never walked without my branch, but I quickly threw it away when I perceived the Abbé Delille.

In June, 1789, I was dining at Malmaison, and met the Abbé Sièyes and several other partisans of the Revolution. M. du Moley ranted against the aristocracy ; everybody yelled and declaimed on different topics, enough to have created a general disturbance ; it was like a revolutionary

club, and these conversations made me very uncomfortable. After dinner Abbé Sièyes observed to someone, I forget whom : "I really believe we shall go too far." "They will go so far that they will lose their way," said I, to Madame du Moley, who had heard what the Abbé had said, and felt distressed at such sinister forebodings.

About the same time I went to spend a few days at Marly with Madame Auguier, a sister of Madame Campan, and attached to the Queen's household like herself. She had a château and fine park near the weir. One day as we were standing at a window looking on to the court, and from thence to the high road, we saw a drunken man enter and fall down. Madame Auguier, with her usual kindness, called to her husband's valet and told him to pick up this unfortunate creature, take him to the kitchen and look after him. Soon after the valet returned. "Madame is really too kind," said he, "this man is a miscreant ! here are the papers he let fall from his pocket." And he placed in our hands several documents, of which one began with : "Down with the Royal Family ! down with the nobles and priests !" then followed revolutionary litanies and thousands of atrocious prophecies, drawn up in language which made one's hair stand on end. Madame Auguier had the village guards called up, four of these soldiers came ; she desired them to take this man away and find out more about him : they led him off, but the valet, who followed them for some distance, without their knowledge, saw them, as soon as they were out of sight, take their prisoner by the arm and jump, sing and dance with him as though they were the best of friends. This

terrified us ; what was to become of us if the civil guard even lent itself to the cause of the wicked ?

I advised Madame Auguier to show these papers to the Queen, and a few days after, being on duty again, she read them to Her Majesty, who returned them, saying : “ It is impossible that they should meditate such wickedness, I shall never believe them capable of it ! ”

Alas ! subsequent events have shown the fallacy of this noble doubt ; and, not to speak of the august victim who would not believe in such horrors, poor Madame Auguier herself was destined to pay for her devotion with her life.

This devotion never wavered. In the worst times of the Revolution, knowing the Queen was without money, she insisted on lending her twenty-five louis. The Revolutionists heard of it and went to the Tuileries to take her to prison, or in other words to the guillotine. When she beheld them coming furiously towards her with menaces on their lips, Madame Auguier preferred a speedy death to the agony of falling into their hands ; she threw herself out of the window and was killed.

I have known few women more beautiful or pleasing than was Madame Auguier. She was tall and well made ; she had a fresh face with a pink and white complexion, and lovely eyes full of sweetness and goodness. She left two daughters, whom I have known since they were children at Marly. One married Marshal Ney ; the second M. Debroc. This last one died very young and very unfortunately ; as she was travelling with Madame Louis Bonaparte, an intimate friend, she attempted in an excursion

to Ancenis to cross a deep crevice on a plank ; the plank gave way, and the poor thing was killed in the chasm.

Madame Auguier had two sisters ; one was the Madame Campan, well known as first lady in waiting to the Queen, and the clever directress of the educational establishment at St. Germain, where all the celebrities of the Empire had their daughters educated. I knew Madame Campan at Versailles, when she enjoyed the greatest favour and confidence of the Queen. I never doubted that she would ever feel grateful to her august mistress for her kindness, when, during my sojourn at St. Petersburg, you must remember that one evening I heard her accused of having abandoned and betrayed the Queen. I stood up warmly for her against this calumnious report, and repeatedly said that it could not be true. Two years later, on my return to France, I received a few days after my arrival the following letter from Madame Campan, which I copy so that you may be made aware of what I consider to be a very truthful justification.

“ Saint Germain,

“ This 27th of January, old style.

“ You said when far away from me, dear lady, ‘ It could not be true ! ’ Goodness, sense, and kindness formed your opinion ; and these rare qualities, rare in our days are happily for me united with still rarer talents in yourself ; I feel deeply your kind speech on my behalf. How, indeed, could you believe that I should ever waver an instant in my sentiments, opinions, and devotion to the unfortunate being who did her utmost for my happiness and that of my family ? I have had, on the contrary, the

pleasure of giving her proofs of a gratitude which she had a right to expect. My poor sister Auguier and myself, although I was not on service, faced death rather than quit her that ever memorable and terrible night of the 10th of August. Saved from this massacre, but hiding and dying of fear in different houses in Paris, we gathered strength enough to reach the Feuillants, and be with her again in her first detention at the Assemblée. Pétion alone parted us from her, when we wished to follow her to the Tuileries. After such true and natural acts, for which I take no praise to myself, how, will you say, could anyone be so strangely calumniated? Was I not to be made to pay dear for the marked and prolonged favour of so many years? Is favour ever forgiven in a court, even when it falls upon a servant? They wished to make the Queen think badly of me, that was all. They will not succeed, for some day people will know how much she trusted and confided in me in most important matters. I must nevertheless affirm, so as not to be misunderstood, my real feelings as regarded the plan of emigration which I considered as fatal to the emigrants, but even more so, in my ideas at that time, to the welfare of Louis XVI. Whilst living in the Tuileries I was struck by this fact, that it was only a quarter of a league from that palace to the insurgent faubourgs, and a hundred leagues from Coblenz or the protecting armies. Women are by nature talkative, and I stated too often and too openly my opinion of this plan, which in those days was the hope of everybody. A very different sentiment from any criminal and foolish wish, for a fearful resolution dictated my fears.

Time has only too well justified them ; and the countless victims of that project ought not to impute as a crime to me what I said at the time.

“But now I am living in another sphere ; I have given myself up completely to my work, with a peaceful and untroubled conscience. I have long wished you to see my method of education, to receive and welcome you as a sincere and precious friend. Come some day with the interesting and unfortunate Rousseau, and it will be a joyful day for me. Believe in my esteem, gratitude and affection, ever your friend,

“GENET CAMPAN.”

Madame Auguier had another sister, besides Madame Campan, called Rousseau, a very agreeable woman whom the Queen had placed in the household of the first Dauphin and who often entertained us during my court sittings. Madame Rousseau left a son, known under the name of Amédée de Beauplan, a very good musician. Madame Rousseau was so dear to the young prince, that the charming child said to her two days before his death, “I love thee so much, Rousseau, that I shall still love thee after I am dead.”

Madame Rousseau’s husband was fencing master to the Enfants de France ; being as it were doubly attached to the Royal Family, he could not escape death ; he was taken prisoner and guillotined. I have heard that when the sentence was passed, the judge had the atrocity to call out : “Fence that, Rousseau, if you can !”

Whilst relating these horrors, I am encroaching on the

space I have left to tell you of my life up to the day I left France. I shall resume in my next letter the account of the sad events which caused me to flee from my country, and seek for safety in foreign lands. Adieu, dear friend.





LETTER XII.

1789—I take refuge with Brongniart—MM. de Sombreuil—Pamela
—The 5th of October—The Royal Family are taken from Versailles—I leave Paris—My Companions in the diligence—I cross the mountains:



HE dreadful year of 1789 began, and fear had taken hold of the wisest amongst us. I remember one evening having invited some friends for a concert, and they arrived with consternation depicted on their faces; they had been that morning to Longchamps; the populace, assembled at the Barrière de l'Etoile, had abused them horribly, especially those who were driving—some wretches sprang on to the carriage steps calling out: "Next year you will be behind your carriages, and we shall be inside!" and many other still worse speeches; these incidents cast a gloom over my party, as you can suppose—the person least terrified was Madame de Villette, Voltaire's beauty. As for me, I had no occasion to be told of fresh details on the horrors which were being prepared. I know well that my house, Rue du Gros Chenet, where I had not lived for more than three months, was marked by the miscreants. They threw sulphur into our cellars through the gratings. If I stood

at the window, brutal sansculottes shook their fists at me. I heard all sorts of sinister rumours on every side, and lived in a continual state of anxiety and despair.

My health suffered so much, that two good friends, Brongniart, the architect, and his wife, when they came to see me, found me looking so ill and thin that they implored me to come and spend a few days with them, which offer I accepted with gratitude. Brongniart lodged in the Invalides ; I was taken there by a doctor attached to the Palais Royal, whose servants wore the Orleans livery, the only one respected in those days. They gave me the best bed. As I could not eat anything, they fed me with excellent Bordeaux wine and soup, and Madame Brongniart never left me. So much care ought to have done me good, seeing too that my friends did not think as badly of affairs as I did ; but they could not reassure me against the evils I foresaw. What was the use of living ? or of taking care of oneself ? said I often to my friends, for terror of the future made me take a disgust to life, and yet my liveliest imagination never went as far as the reality. Afterwards I remember having supper with Brongniart and the excellent M. de Sombreuil, then Governor of the Invalides, being one of the guests ; he told us that they were coming to take possession of the arms at the dépôt, but added that he had hidden them so well that he defied them to discover them. The worthy man did not know that the only person to be relied on was oneself. As the arms were taken away, he was of course betrayed by one of the inmates of the establishment whom he had employed.

M. de Sombreuil, as much respected for his moral qualities as for his military talents, was imprisoned with those who were massacred in the prisons on the 2nd of September. The assassins spared his life owing to the tears and supplications of his heroic daughter, but atrocious even in their mercy they forced Mademoiselle de Sombreuil to drink a glass of the blood that was flowing in the prison; and for long afterwards the sight of anything red would make the unfortunate girl retch dreadfully! Later on in 1794, M. de Sombreuil was sent to the scaffold by the revolutionary tribunal. These two circumstances inspired the poet Legouv  with the finest of his verses

“Des bourreaux l'ont absous, des juges l'ont frapp .”

M. de Sombreuil left a son, distinguished for his gallantry and character. He commanded one of the English regiments at Quiberon in 1795. The National Convention having violated the capitulation signed by General Hoche, M. de Sombreuil received death like a brave man; he would not allow his eyes to be bandaged and gave the order to fire. Tallien at the time of execution said to him: “Monsieur, you belong to an unlucky family.” “I had intended to avenge them,” replied M. de Sombreuil, “but I can only follow their example.”

Madame Brongniart took me to walk behind the Invalides; some masons were standing near. As we were sitting against one of the walls, we heard two men talking amongst them who could not see us. “Will you earn ten francs?” said one, “come with us, you will only have to shout: Down with this one! or that! and especially to

shout against Cayonne." "Ten francs are worth having," replied the other, "but should we get no blows ourselves?" "Get away!" retorted the first, "we should be the ones to give them." You may imagine the effect of such a dialogue on me!

The day after the one I speak of, we were passing before the grating of the Invalides where a large crowd was assembled of the hideous creatures who haunted the galleries of the Palais Royal; all people of no occupation, in rags and tatters, neither workmen or peasants, no name could be given them unless it were that of bandits, so terrifying were their faces. Madame Brongniart who was more courageous than myself, sought to reassure me; but I was so frightened that I turned back to the house, when we saw in the distance a young woman on horseback, in a riding habit and hat with long black feathers. Immediately the crowd parted and made way for her; she was followed by two grooms in the Orleans livery. I at once recognised the lovely Pamela, who had been introduced to me by Madame de Genlis. She was in the zenith of her beauty and was really exquisite; we heard the band of ruffians shout: "There is the one we must have for our queen!" Pamela kept pacing to and fro amongst this disgusting crowd which saddened me much. She afterwards married Lord Fitzgerald, who is now dead; she is still living but is much altered.

Shortly after I returned to my home, but I could not live there. Society was at a standstill, and honest folks had no support; for the National Guard was so curiously composed, that the spectacle it afforded was as strange as it

was horrible. Fear seemed to cast a gloom over all ; I have noticed since, that the generation born during the revolution is much less robust than the one preceding : how many sickly and suffering children must have been brought into the world during that sad time !

M. de Rivière, chargé-d'affaires to the Saxon court, whose daughter married my brother, offered me his hospitality, and I spent at least two weeks with him. It was there the busts of the Duc d'Orléans and M. Necker were brought, followed by an immense crowd, loudly proclaiming that one should be their king and the other their protector. The evening these *honest folks* came, they set fire to the *barrière* which was at the end of the Rue Chaussée d'Antin, where we lived, and then they unpaved the streets and set up barricades, shouting "Here are the enemy." The enemy never came ; alas ! they were in Paris.

Although M. de Rivière treated me as one of his own children, and I believed myself to be safe under his protection, since he was a Minister of Foreign Affairs, I had quite decided on leaving France. I had long desired to go to Rome. The number of portraits I had undertaken had alone prevented my doing so before ; but if ever the time for my departure was to come it had come then, I could no longer paint ! my imagination was so dazed by the horrors I saw that it ceased to influence my art : and, besides, wicked libels were showered on my friends and on myself, alas ! and although, thank God ! I had done harm to no one, I was in the place of the man who said : "I am accused of having taken away the towers of Notre

Dame ; they are in their places ; but go I must, for it is plain I have given offence somehow."

I left several unfinished portraits, amongst others, that of Mademoiselle Contat ; I refused to paint Mademoiselle de Laborde, afterwards Duchesse de Noailles, whose father desired her portrait ; she was barely sixteen and very lovely ; but it was no longer a question of success or fortune, it was a question of saving one's head. Therefore I had my carriage packed, and had my passport for leaving the next day with my daughter and her governess, when my room was entered by a number of armed National Guards, most of them drunk, and with dreadful countenances. Some came up to me and spoke in coarse language, and said "You shall not leave, citoyenne, you shall not leave ;" at last they departed. I was left in a most miserable condition, when I saw two return whose faces did not terrify me ; although they were of the band, I soon perceived they meant no harm. "Madame," said one, "we are your neighbours, we advise you to leave as quickly as possible. You cannot live here, you are so altered that we are quite concerned for you. But do not leave in your carriage ; go by the diligence, it is much safer."

I thanked them heartily, and followed their good advice. I engaged three places, as I wished to take my daughter, then five or six years old ; but I could not get my places for a fortnight, as all who emigrated like myself went in the diligence.

I was so altered that, the eve of my departure, having gone to see my mother to wish her goodbye, she only re-

cognised me from my voice ; yet it was only three weeks since we had met.

At last the welcome day arrived, it was the 5th of October ; the King and Queen were brought from Versailles to Paris amidst pikes ! my brother witnessed the arrival of their Majesties at the Hôtel de Ville ; he heard M. Bailly's discourse, and as he knew that I was to leave that evening he came to see me about ten o'clock. Never, said he, had the Queen looked more majestic than to-day, when she entered amidst these demons. Then he told me the beautiful answer she had made to M. Bailly, "I know all, I have seen all, and I forgive all." The events of that day caused me great anxiety on account of their Majesties and for all decent people, so that at midnight I was dragged to the diligence in a most miserable state of mind. I feared passing the Faubourg St. Antoine, which I was forced to do, to reach the Barrière du Trone. My brother Robert and my husband accompanied me to the barrière, and never left the diligence. This faubourg, of which we were so fearful, was perfectly quiet ; all its inhabitants, workmen and others had been to Versailles to fetch the Royal Family, and the fatigue of the journey had made them sleepy.

I had in front of me in the diligence a very dirty and odoriferous man, who quietly informed me he had stolen several watches and other objects. Fortunately, he saw nothing on me likely to tempt him ; for I took but little linen with me, and eighty louis for my journey. I left all my trinkets at Paris, and the proceeds of my labours were in my husband's possession, who, as I have said be-

fore, spent it all. I lived, whilst abroad, on the portraits I took. Far from M. Le Brun ever sending me money, he wrote me most dismal letters on his poverty, so that I once sent him a thousand écus, and another time a hundred louis, besides sending equal sums to my mother.

The thief, not content with relating his robberies, spoke continually about hanging such and such people, naming several of my acquaintances. My little girl thought him very wicked, and was much afraid of him, which gave me courage to say : " I pray you, Sir, do not speak of murder before this child ! " He was silenced, and amused himself by playing with her. There was, besides this man, on the banquette where I was sitting, another, a furious Jacobin from Grenoble, about fifty ; ugly, with a bilious complexion, who, each time we descended for dinner or supper at an inn, began to declaim in a most terrible manner. In all the towns, crowds stopped the diligence to learn news of Paris. Our Jacobin then called out : " Be quiet, my children ; we have the Baker and his wife safe in Paris ; they will be forced to accept a constitution, and all will be well ! " The people believed in this man as an oracle. I no longer feared for myself, but for everybody — my mother, brother, and friends ; I trembled also for their Majesties. All along the road as far as Lyons, men on horseback approached the diligence to tell us the King and Queen were massacred, and Paris was on fire. My poor little girl trembled all over ; she believed her father was killed, and our house burnt down, and when I had succeeded in calming her, there came another horseman with the same tales.

At last we reached Lyons. I went to M. Artaut, a merchant, whom I had entertained at Paris, with his wife. I was not well acquainted with them, but they had inspired me with confidence, because our opinions agreed perfectly on all that was passing at the time. My first thought was to ask them if it were true the King and Queen had been massacred, and, thank Heaven! for once I was reassured.

Monsieur and Madame Artaut found some difficulty in recognising me at first, not only because I was so altered, but because I wore the dress of a badly-dressed work-woman, with a large handkerchief falling over my eyes. I had had occasion to be thankful I had taken this precaution on my journey. I had exhibited at the *salon* the portrait representing myself with my child in my arms. I had done this for M. d'Angevilliers. But it had been taken from him during the emigrations and carried to the Ministère de l'Intérieur. The Grenoble Jacobin spoke of the exhibition, and praised this same picture. I trembled lest he should recognise me, and did my best to hide my face. Thanks to that and my dress, I escaped unnoticed.

I spent three days at Lyons with the Artauts. I had need of the rest, but with the exception of my hosts, I saw no one in the town, as I desired to remain in strict *incognito*. M. Artaut engaged a driver for me, and told him I was a relation of his. He put me under the charge of this nice man, who took the greatest care of both my daughter and myself. I cannot tell you what I felt when we crossed the Bridge of Beauvoisin. Then, and then

only, I began to breathe freely. I was out of France—of France, my country—which I reproached myself for quitting with so much joy. The sight of the mountains distracted me from my sad thoughts. I had never seen high ones before. Those of Savoy seemed to reach the sky. My first feeling was one of awe, but I insensibly became accustomed to this spectacle and ended by admiring it.

The landscape at Echelles delighted me. I imagined myself in the Titans' Gallery, and thus I have always called it. Wishing to enjoy these beauties more thoroughly, I descended from the carriage, but about half way on the road I was much alarmed, for they were blasting some rocks, and the result was like the report of thousands of cannons reverberating from rock to rock with a terrible sound.

I ascended the Mont Cenis, along with several other strangers. A postillion came up. "Madame ought to take a mule," said he, "for a lady like herself." I told him I was a workwoman, accustomed to walking. "Ah!" replied he, laughing, "Madame is not a workwoman; I know who she is." "And who am I, then?" "You are Madame Le Brun, who paints beautifully, and we are very glad to know you are safe away from wicked people." I never could guess how this man managed to know my name, but that has proved to me how many emissaries the Jacobins must have employed. Happily I no longer feared them; I was out of their dreadful clutches. For want of my country I was going to inhabit places where peace and the arts flourished. I was going to visit Rome, Naples,

Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg, and, above all, I was going, unknown to myself, to meet you, dear friend, to know you and to love you.

Always yours.





SOUVENIRS.

CHAPTER I.

Turin — Porporati — Correggio — Parma — M. de Flavigny — The Churches — The Infant of Parma — Modena — Bologna — Florence.



AFTER having crossed the Mont Cenis, I reached Turin, tired in body and mind, for a drenching rain had prevented my getting out of the carriage to walk a little, and I know nothing more annoying than being driven slowly along. At last my conductor deposited me in a very bad inn. It was nine at night; we were dying of hunger, but as nothing was to be had in the house, my daughter, her governess and myself were obliged to go supperless to bed.

The next day, very early, I acquainted Porporati of my arrival; his beautiful engravings are well known. He was then a professor at Turin. I had seen a good deal of him when in Paris, and he came at once to visit me. Finding me so uncomfortable in my inn, he begged me to stay at his house, which I dared not do at first, but he implored

me so eagerly and frankly that I gave way, and allowing my packages to be carried to his domicile I followed soon after with my child. I was received by his daughter, aged eighteen, who lived with him also, and both were unremitting in their attention to us during the five or six days we passed in their house. Being anxious to reach Rome, I did not see many people at Turin. I contented myself with visiting the city, and making a few excursions. The town is handsome; all the streets run parallel, and the houses are regularly built. A high mountain arises close behind, called La Superga, the burial place of the Kings of Sardinia.

Porporati took me to the theatre. • We went to the largest, and there I perceived in the front boxes the Duc de Bourbon and the Duke d'Enghien, whom I had not seen for some time. The father looked so young that he might have been the brother of his son.

The music pleased me extremely, and I asked Porporati if his city contained many lovers of art; he shook his head and said: "They know nothing about it, this is what happened to me: a very great man, having heard that I was an engraver, came to me quite recently and wanted me to engrave his seal."

This little anecdote convinced me that the inhabitants of Turin had no very great knowledge of art either.

I left my kind hosts for Parma; I had barely arrived there when I received a visit from the Comte de Flavigny, staying there as a Minister of Louis XVI. M. de Flavigny was about sixty—I had not met him in France before; but his extreme courtesy and willingness to do me service

made me soon know and appreciate him ; his wife also made much of my daughter and myself, and their society was a great resource for me in a town where I knew nobody.

M. de Flavigny made me see everything of any importance in Parma. After having contemplated the magnificent painting by Correggio of the Nativity, which we have had in the Museum of the Louvre, I visited the churches where the works of this great master are the finest ornament. I could not behold so many divine paintings without believing in the inspiration which the Christian artist draws from his religion ; no doubt fables have charming fictions, but the poetry of Christianity is to me far more beautiful.

I went to the summit of the church of Saint-Jean ; there I was able to admire more closely a cupola where Correggio painted several angels, surrounded by feathery clouds. What surprised me was that the faces are so exquisitely finished, they might have been standing on a painter's easel, and yet it does not detract from the view of the cupola seen from below. M. le Comte de Flavigny presented me to the Infanta, sister to Marie Antoinette, much older than our Queen, of whom she had neither the beauty or the grace. She was in deep mourning for her brother, the Emperor Joseph II. Her apartments being all hung with black she looked to me like a ghost, all the more so because she was extremely thin and very pale.

This princess rode on horseback every day. Her manners and way of living were like those of a man. In fact I was not charmed with her, although she received me very graciously.

I did not remain long at Parma, the season was advancing and I had to cross the Bolognese mountains. I was therefore in a hurry to begin my journey, but the kind M. de Flavigny made me adjourn my departure for three days, because he was expecting a friend whom he wished to take charge of me, not wanting me to cross the mountains alone with my daughter and her governess. This friend, M. le Vicomte de Lespignière, arrived, and I was entrusted to him; his carriage followed mine so that I travelled most safely as far as Rome.

I stopped but little at Modena, a pretty town which looked nice to live in. The streets are lined with long arcades which shelter the foot passengers from rain and sunshine. The palace looked elegant and majestic. It contains several fine paintings, one by Raffaele and many by Giulio Romano.

After having crossed the mountains, which are very terrifying, for the road is narrow, steep and precipitous, causing me thereby to walk a good deal, we reached Bologna, feeling rather tired. My wish was to spend at least a week in this town, in order to admire the master-pieces of its school, generally considered one of the first in Italy. Therefore I hastened to unpack my luggage. "Alas! Madame," said the innkeeper, "you are taking needless trouble, for, being French, you can only spend one night here."

I was in despair, all the more because I saw coming towards me a tall black man, dressed like Bartholo, whom I at once took to be a messenger of the Papal Government. He held a paper in his hand, which I at once

imagined was the order for my quitting the town in twenty-four hours. "I know what you have come to say, Signor," said I sorrowfully, "you have brought me the order to leave." "No, I come, on the contrary, to bring you permission to remain as long as you please, Madame," he replied.

My joy on this good news was great, and I hastened to benefit by this favour. It was plain that the Papal Government was informed from Turin of the names of all the French travellers who wished to cross the Papal States.

I visited several of the palaces which contain masterpieces of the Bolognese school; in one of these the *custode* followed me round and persisted in telling me the names of all the painters. He irritated me much, and I quietly told him he was giving himself needless trouble, for I knew all these masters. He contented himself after that with accompanying me; but as he heard me admiring the finest works and repeating the painter's name, he left me and went to my servant and said: "Who is this lady? I have led many great princesses through this gallery, but I never met any as well informed as this one is." Three days after my arrival, the 3rd of November, 1789, I was received as a member of the Academy of Bologna. M. Bequetti, who was the director, came himself to bring my letters of acceptance.

I consoled myself for leaving so many beautiful things by the idea of those which I should find in Florence. After having crossed the Apennines and the arid hills of Radicofani, we passed through a fertile country which is at the outskirts of Tuscany. On the right of the road a little

volcano was pointed out to me, which bursts out on the approach of a light, called *Fuoco di Lagno*. Further on the road ascended, and I saw Florence situated at the bottom of a large valley, which at first looked rather gloomy, for I like towns built on a height ; but as soon as I entered the illustrious city, I was surprised and delighted with its beauty and view.

After having installed myself in the hotel to which I had been recommended, I commenced by taking a walk with my daughter and the Marquis de Lespignière on one of the surrounding hills, from whence there is a magnificent prospect, and where are several cypress trees growing. My daughter looking at them said : "These trees seem to ask one to be silent." I was so surprised at a child of seven saying such a thing, that I have never forgotten it.

Notwithstanding my extreme haste to get to Rome, I felt obliged to remain some little time in this city. I visited the celebrated gallery which the Medicis enriched with so much care ; but I should require a volume to enter into details on all the riches I had the pleasure of beholding in this place of enchantment for artists.

Of course I could not leave Florence without seeing the Altoviti Palace, where Raffaele's fine portrait by himself is kept. This portrait has been put under glass, in order to preserve it, and this precaution has darkened the shadows, but all the flesh tints are very pure and delicately coloured. The features of the portrait are very regular, good eyes and a clear, penetrating expression.

I did not neglect to visit the Mediciean Library, which contains very rare manuscripts. There are some old mis-

sals of which the left margins are exquisitely painted ; holy subjects are done in miniature in colours and admirably finished.

The day I visited the gallery containing the portraits of modern painters by themselves, I was honoured by being asked for mine for the City of Florence, and I promised to send it when in Rome.* I saw with great satisfaction in this gallery the picture of Angelica Kauffmann, who is one of the greatest honours to our sex.

All the time of my sojourn at Florence was one of enchantment. I had made the acquaintance of a French lady, the Marquise de Venturi, who treated me with much kindness. In the evenings she accompanied me along the banks of the Arno, where, at a certain hour, crowds of carriages and elegantly dressed people were to be seen, whose presence enlivened the charming spot. These promenades and my mornings at the Medici Gallery, and at the churches and palaces of the city, caused my days to pass most agreeably ; and had I not thought of my poor France, I should then have been a most happy woman.

* Madame Vigée Le Brun kept her promise. Her portrait is in the portrait-room of painters, under No. 360.





CHAPTER II.

Rome—Drouais—Raffaelle—The Coliseum—Angelica Kauffmann—
Cardinal Bernis—Roman Customs—My Movements.



SHORTLY after my arrival in Rome I wrote the following letter to Robert, the landscape painter :

“Rome, December 1st, 1789.

“It was with sorrow, my dear friend, that I left the lovely city of Florence, where I saw very rapidly all the most remarkable works of art, and which I promised myself to visit more leisurely on my return from Rome.

“You have noticed my huge sighs when I heard the conversations of those who had had the happiness of living here ; you know how much I desired to visit in my turn this beautiful land of art. When, at some distance from Rome, I beheld the dome of St. Peter’s, it would be impossible for me to describe my intense joy. At last I crossed the Ponte Molle, and I must confess that I thought it rather small, and the Tiber a very dirty stream ; I crossed the Porta del Popolo and Corso, and finally reached the Académie de France. Our director, M. Ménageot, came to the carriage door ; I asked him to put us up till I had found some other lodging, and he at once

gave me a small apartment, with my daughter and governess close by. Moreover, he lent me ten louis that I might be able to finish paying my driver ; for I must tell you that I only brought eighty louis with me, my dear husband having kept the rest for himself, as you know was his custom.

“The same day M. Ménageot took me to Saint Peter’s; its immense size did not strike me all at once. I attribute this effect to the beautiful proportion of its details.

“The next day I visited the Vatican Museum. It is to the Greeks that we must ascribe, in its greatest perfection, the elegance of forms ; in seeing their works it is evident that they had admirable models, and that the men and women of ancient Greece must have realized of old what we consider our beau ideal of beauty. As I was setting out on my way to the Museum, I received a visit from the pupils of the Academy. They brought me young Drouais’ palette and asked me in exchange for some of the brushes I used whilst painting ; I cannot conceal how much affected I was by this flattering demand, and the honour paid to me ; I shall ever remember it with pleasure.

“The galleries, salons and corridors of the Vatican are quite unique in the world. It is astonishing to behold the numerous works of Raffaele, when one sees the wonderful School of Athens, and then the Fire of Borgo, composed in such a different style. But what surprises me more than everything is, that he who died so young should have left so many master-pieces.

“It is a great misfortune that so many beautiful pro-

ductions are being destroyed, not only by time, but because young artists are permitted to trace over the heads with chalks. I remember on this subject hearing a former director of the Academy say to his pupils: 'What need have you to trace out the heads by Raffaele? do them from nature, morbleu! it is the same thing; go on to the Piazza del Popolo.'

"I went to the Coliseum; this ruin is truly beautiful; the colour of the stone and the vegetation growing around make a lovely pictorial effect. I cannot imagine what possessed you to climb to the very top of everything for the mere pleasure of planting a cross there; it was a dangerous exploit. I must not forget to tell you that this cross has remained where you placed it, and your skill and courage are become historical, for they are still the talk of Rome.

"I have seen Angelica Kauffmann, whom I had long wished to know. I found her very interesting, apart from her great talent, by her wit and intellectual powers. She is a woman of about fifty, very delicate; her health was destroyed by her misfortune in marrying an adventurer, who ruined her. She married after his death an architect, who is also her man of business; she talked to me for some time, and very well, during the two evenings I passed with her. Her conversation is very gentle; she is very well informed, but totally devoid of enthusiasm. Angelica possesses some paintings by the great masters, and I saw several of her own works; her sketches pleased me more than her pictures, because their colouring is like that of Titian.

"I dined with her yesterday at our Ambassador's, the

Cardinal de Bernis, whom I had visited three days after my arrival. He placed us both at table by his side. He had invited several strangers, and some of the Diplomatic Corps, so that we were thirty at the dinner, the Cardinal doing the honours most gracefully, although for himself he never eats more than two little dishes of vegetables. But the curious part was yet to come ; this morning I was waked at seven, and the family of the Cardinal de Bernis was announced. I was astonished ! I arose in great haste and they entered ; this family consisted of five great big footmen in livery, who came to demand a *buono mano*. I was informed that they came for some drink money. I wished them good-morning, and gave them two Roman écus.

“This is an immense letter, my friend, but I had need of a long chat with you. Remember me to those of my friends and acquaintances who are still in Paris. How is our dear Abbé Delille ? speak of me to him as well as to Brongniart and my dear Madame Verdun. Alas ! when shall I see you all again.

“Adieu.”

As I could not remain in the very small apartment I occupied in the Academy, I was obliged to seek another lodging. I did not regret the one I left, for as it looked on to a little street in which carriages were always being put up, the horses and drivers made a diabolical noise ; there was besides a Madonna at the corner of the street, and the Calabrians, whose patron saint she was, came to sing and play on string instruments before her niche till daybreak.

I found some difficulty in getting a lodging, for I had great need of sleep, and quiet is absolutely necessary for me ; I at first occupied apartments on the Piazza di Spagna, at Denis's, the landscape painter ; but every night the carriages rattled along this square where the Spanish Ambassador lived. All sorts of people met there after I was in bed to sing in choruses, pieces which the young girls and boys had improvised, most charmingly, it is true, for the Italian nation seems to have been created to make good music ; but this habitual concert which would have enchanted me during the day, was distressing at night. I could not rest before five in the morning. I therefore quitted the Piazza di Spagna.

I hired near there, in a tranquil street, a little house which suited me perfectly, where I had a charming bedroom, draped with green, an advantage I fully appreciated. I had visited all the house from top to bottom, and had even examined the yards of neighbouring houses without perceiving anything to alarm me. I fancied I should hear no other sound than that of a small fountain in the court, and in my delight I hastened to pay the ten or twelve coins for the first month in advance. Joyfully I went to bed in perfect peace, at two in the morning I heard an infernal noise precisely behind my head ; it was so violent that my daughter's governess, who slept two rooms off, was awakened. As soon as I was up, I asked my hostess the cause of this fearful disturbance ; I was informed that it was the noise of the pump attached to the wall near my bed ; the washerwomen could not whiten the linen in the day, owing to the great heat, so they only came to this

pump at night. As may be imagined, I hastened to leave this charming little house.

After having sought fruitlessly to find a suitable abode, I was told of a small palace in which I could hire an apartment ; having found nothing more suitable I installed myself there ; I had more space than I required for comfort, but all the rooms were filthy. At length, after having cleaned some of them I settled down ; from the first night I was able to judge of the delights of this habitation. A chilliness, a fearful damp I could have slept through, but an army of enormous rats, which ran over my room and ate the woodwork, prevented my doing so. When I asked the guardian the next day why this palace was so cold and why there were so many rats, he replied that for nine years he had been unable to let it : which I could well believe ; notwithstanding all these drawbacks I was forced to remain there six weeks.

At last I found a house which seemed just the thing. I would not take it unless I tried it for one night first. Barely had I got into bed than I heard a most extraordinary sound above my head ; it was caused by quantities of little wood insects which eat the beams. As soon as I opened the shutter the noise ceased : but to my great regret, I was obliged to leave this house. I do not believe it possible for anyone to make more moves than I did during my sojourn in the Eternal City : consequently I am convinced that the most difficult thing to do in Rome is to find a resting place for one's head.



CHAPTER III.

Portraits done in Rome—The Holy Week—The Papal Benediction—
The Carnival—Madame Benti—Crescentini—Marchesi—Her last
appearance in Rome.



VERY soon after my arrival in Rome I painted my portrait for the Florentine Gallery. I depicted myself, with a palette in my hand, before a picture on which I was supposed to be tracing the head of our Queen with white chalks. Then I painted Miss Pitt, a daughter of Lord Camelford; she was sixteen and very pretty, therefore I represented her as Hebe on clouds, holding a goblet in her hand from which an eagle was drinking. I painted the eagle from life and had great doubts whether he would not devour me; he belonged to Cardinal de Bernis. The wretched creature, who was accustomed to living chained up in a courtyard in the open air, was furious at being in my room and wished to fly at me. I confess I felt horribly frightened.

At the same time I took the portrait of a Polish lady, the Comtesse Potocki. She came to me with her husband, and when he had left us, she coolly observed; "It is my third husband; but I think I shall take up the first again, who suited me better, although he is a regular scamp." I

painted this Pole very picturesquely, leaning against a mossy rock and behind her some waterfalls.

I afterwards took the portrait of Mademoiselle Roland, then mistress of Lord Wellesley, who married her soon after; then my own portrait on my reception to the Roman Academy; a copy of the one I destined for Florence, and a portrait of Lord Bristol, half length; that of Madame Silva, a young Portuguese I met since at Naples, and of whom I shall speak later on. In fact I worked prodigiously hard at Rome and during the three years I passed in Italy. Not only did I find painting a great resource and enjoyment, surrounded as I was by works of art; but I had to rebuild my fortune, for I did not possess a hundred francs a year. Luckily I had only to choose amongst the greatest personages the portraits I wished to take.

I have decided on not entering into details concerning the beauties of Rome, because there have already been so many books printed on the subject I should fear to become wearisome; no one can imagine or have any idea of the grand and imposing spectacle produced by the Catholic religion who has not seen Rome at Easter or during Lent. The Holy Week commences on Palm Sunday and is passed in religious ceremonies, when the pomp is really magnificent.

On Wednesday, I went with the crowd to the chapel on Monte Cavallo, where they sang Pergolesi's Stabat Mater, a celestial production. On Thursday, I attended the splendid mass at Saint Peter's. The cardinals clothed in rich chasubles, and holding wax tapers, walked to the

Pauline Chapel, which was illuminated by thousands of tapers. Numbers of soldiers, wearing cuirasses and steel helmets, followed the cortège. The aspect of this procession was beautiful. The morning of Good Friday I went to the Sistine Chapel to hear the famous Miserere of Allegri, sung by soprano voices, without any instrument. In the evening I went to St. Peter's, the hundred lamps on the altar were extinguished. The church was lighted only by an illuminated cross of great brilliancy. This cross was at least twenty feet high and appeared to be magically suspended. We saw the Pope enter and kneel; he was imitated by all the Cardinals; but I must confess that what surprised and shocked me, was to see, during the prayer offered up by the Holy Father, several foreigners walk about as though they were in the gardens of the Palais Royal.

I took care on Easter Day to be on the Piazza of St. Peter's, and see the Pope give his benediction. Nothing could be more solemn. This immense Piazza was crowded from early morn by peasants and people from the neighbouring towns, all in divers and many hued costumes, along with several pilgrims. The galleries each side were filled with Romans and strangers, and in front of them were the Papal Guard and Swiss soldiers, with their ensigns and banners unfurled.

A most devout silence reigned over all; this crowd was as immoveable as the superb obelisk of oriental granite which adorns the Piazza; one heard only the sound of the water falling from the two beautiful fountains.

At ten o'clock the Pope arrived, dressed in white with

his mitre on his head. He sat on a splendid crimson throne in the middle, outside the church. All the Cardinals surrounded him in their fine robes. I must say that Pope Pius VI. was superb. His healthy face bore no traces of age. His hands were white and plump. He knelt to read his prayer ; after which he arose and gave three benedictions, pronouncing these words, "*urbi et orbi*" (to the city and to the world).

Then as if struck by a flash of lightning, the people, strangers, soldiers, everybody knelt, whilst the cannon resounded all around, a sight I believe none can behold without being affected thereby.

The benediction given, the Cardinals threw from the tribune a great number of papers, which I was informed were indulgences. It was only then that the crowd all dispersed, and thousands of arms were raised to seize one of these papers. The movement and eagerness of this crowd was beyond all description. When the Pope left, the military bands played, and the troops departed to the sound of the drums.

The crowds of strangers are attracted to Rome more for the Holy Week than the Carnival. The masks are dressed up as Harlequins, &c., as we see them in Paris on the Boulevards. I only saw one young man walking about in a French dress. He was imitating a rather affected dandy whom we all recognised. The carriages were filled with richly costumed people. The horses were covered with plumes, ribbons, and bells, and the servants were dressed as Harlequins, &c. But it all passed off very quietly.

One of my delights whilst in Rome was the music, and certainly I had plenty. The celebrated Banti was there during my stay; although she had sung several times in Paris I had never heard her, and I had this pleasure at a concert, which was given in an immense gallery. I do not know why, but I had imagined that Banti was extremely tall. She was on the contrary very small and ugly, with such masses of hair that her chignon was like a horse's mane. But what a voice ! none could equal it for strength and compass ; the salon, large as it was, could not suffice for it. Her manner of singing was the same as that of the celebrated Pachiraotti.

This admirable singer was very curiously formed : she had a high chest, shaped like a bellows ; she permitted us to see this strange formation after the concert, when a few ladies and myself withdrew into an adjoining room : I fancied this might explain the power and agility of her voice.

Shortly after my arrival, I went with Angelica Kauffmann to see the opera of Cesar, in which Crescentini made his début. His singing and voice were perfection ; he took a woman's part, and was clothed with a panier, like those worn at the court of Versailles, which made us laugh heartily. Crescentini then possessed all the charm and freshness of youth ; he succeeded Marchesi, to whom the Romans were quite devoted, so that at the last representation they openly told him of their sorrow ; several wept bitterly, which was for some quite a second scene.



CHAPTER IV.

Piazza of St. Peter's—Daggers—The Princesse Joseph de Monaco—
The Duchesse de Fleury—Kindness of Louis XVI.—Abbé Maury
—Etiquette which prevented my taking the Pope's likeness—Tus-
culum—Villas Conti and Adrian—Monte Mario—Genesano—Lake
Nemi—Adventure.



HERE is no city in the world where life passes so agreeably as in Rome ; to walk within its walls is a pleasure, for one never tires of visiting again and again the Coliseum, the Capitol, the Pantheon, St. Peter's with its Piazza, its superb obelisk, its noble fountain which the sun lights up so exquisitely with rainbow hues. This Piazza has a most wonderful appearance at sunset and by moonlight. I am told that all the lower class of women wear daggers ; the men I know are never without them, and this custom often leads to serious results. One evening, shortly after my arrival in Rome, hearing a great noise and tumult in the street, I sent to inquire the cause, and was informed that a man had just been stabbed from motives of revenge. It is only amongst themselves, however, that they give way to the violence of their passions, visitors to Rome being quite safe. In the foregoing instance, there had been a

quarrel of ten years standing, which shows how long a time an Italian remembers an injury.

The manners of the higher classes are, however, much more gentle, for society is the same as in the other cities of Europe. Besides I am not a good judge, for with the exception of what concerns my art, and the invitations which I received to numberless *réunions*, I had little opportunity of knowing the “grandes dames” in Rome. It occurred to me, as it naturally does to all exiles, to seek in a foreign city the society of my compatriots. During the years 1789 and 1790, Rome was crowded with French *émigrés*, many of whom were old acquaintances. Amongst them I must mention the Duc and Duchesse de Fitzjames, with their sons; also the Polignacs. I did not care to visit this family often, for fear of exciting calumnious remarks, for it would at once have been said I was plotting with them; and I thought it a duty to avoid them as much as possible, on account of the relations and friends I had left in France. Besides these, many remarkable people arrived in Rome, amongst others the Princesse Joseph de Monaco, and the Duchesse de Fleury. The Princesse Joseph was a charming person, full of sweetness and amiability. Unhappily, alas! she did not remain in Rome, but soon returned to Paris to try and save the small fortune which still remained for her children. She arrived there during the “Terror”—was arrested and condemned to death, and suffered on the scaffold. She might have had a reprieve could she have been induced to declare herself *enceinte*, but she refused to tell an untruth, and was guillotined.

Of all the French ladies in Rome, I admired the beautiful Duchesse de Fleury the most; she was quite young, and nature had lavished on her all her choicest gifts. She had a lovely face, and the figure of a Venus, added to this, her mind was of a superior order. We felt mutually drawn towards each other; she loved art, and like myself, was passionately fond of the beauties of nature; I found in her a companion I had often longed for.

We regularly spent our evenings together at the hospitable house of Prince Camille de Rohan, who was at that time Ambassador of Malta, and Grand Commander of the Order. Every evening he collected around him the most distinguished foreigners in Rome; the conversation was always animated and interesting; each one spoke of what they had seen during the day, and the wit and tact of the Duchesse de Fleury was remarked by all.

This seductive woman appeared to me to be exposed to all the dangers which menace a lively imagination and an exalted soul; I feared for her happiness; I knew that she frequently corresponded with the Duc de Lauzun, who was a handsome man, witty and amiable, but at the same time utterly wanting in morality, and I greatly dreaded this intimacy for her, though I do not think there was real harm in it. I am not aware that he took an active part in the Revolution, but having remained in France, he was guillotined.

The Duchesse de Fleury returned to Paris in order to get a divorce from her husband; then having fallen desperately in love with M. Montroud, a clever, pushing man, she married him. They at once retired from society, to

enjoy their happiness in solitude ; but alas ! solitude killed their love, and they returned to Paris for a divorce. Her last love affair was with a brother of Garat, who I am told treated her cruelly. At the Restoration, which brought back her father, the Comte de Coigny, she regained peace and happiness, and she remained with him till his death. Before the return of the Bourbons, having occasion one day to visit the Emperor Bonaparte, he said to her brusquely :—

“ Do you still love men ! ”

“ Yes, sire, when they are polite,” she replied.

The arrival in Rome of so many persons who brought news from France made me experience the most varied emotions, sometimes sad and sometimes gay. I was told for example that, shortly after my departure, the king having been requested to let his portrait be taken, replied : “ No, I shall wait the return of Madame Le Brun to have my portrait taken, and it shall be a companion to the one she did of the Queen ; I will be painted full length standing, and giving an order to M. de la Pérouse to make a voyage round the world.”

Nothing gratifies me more than to recall the kindness Louis XVI. always showed to me, and I always reproach myself that I hitherto have forgotten to mention that at the time I made the great picture of the Queen with her children, M. d'Angevilliers came to tell me that the King wished to give me the order of Saint-Michel, which was a decoration entirely for male artists and learned men of the highest order. As even at that time the most odious calumnies were circulated about me, I feared that so great

a distinction would carry to its height the envy already excited, and, though deeply grateful, I nevertheless begged M. d'Angevilliers to try and induce the King to renounce the idea of according me this favour.

I met in Rome one of my best and oldest friends, M. d'Agincourt, who, when living in Paris, lent me all the beautiful drawings in his possession to copy. M. d'Agincourt was an enthusiastic lover of art, and above all of painting; I was very young when he left France; he said to me on leaving, "I shall not see you for three years," and fourteen had passed since then without his having been able to tear himself from Rome, as he could not imagine that one could live anywhere else. He died there, regretted by all who had known him.*

It was also during my first visit to Rome that I met again the Abbé Maury, who was not then a cardinal; he

* Jean-Baptiste-Louis-Georges Veron d'Agincourt, archeologist and distinguished numismatist, was born at Beauvais, April 5th, 1730, and died at Rome, September 24th, 1814, at the age of eighty-four years. D'Agincourt began life at an early age in a cavalry regiment, but he soon renounced a military career. Having received an excellent education, the old soldier resolved to devote himself to the instruction of young orphans. The King, Louis XV., wishing to recompense his noble conduct and generous sacrifice, appointed him *fermier-général*. Having thus become rich, d'Agincourt visited in 1777 England, Holland and Germany, and in 1778 he first visited Italy, which pleased him so much, that he passed the remainder of his life there. He wrote the "History of Art, by Sculpture, from its Decadence in the Fourth Century till its Rise in the Sixth Century," in six volumes, enriched with three hundred and twenty-five engravings.

came to tell me that the Pope wished me to take his portrait. I greatly desired to do so ; but it was necessary that I should be veiled whilst painting His Holiness, and the fear that under the circumstance I should not be able to do justice to my subject, compelled me to decline this honour. I was very sorry about it, for Pius VI. was one of the handsomest men I had seen.

I arrived in Rome, where it rains so little, precisely at the time of the autumn showers, which are real deluges. I had thus to wait for fine weather to visit the environs. M. Ménageot then accompanied me to Tivoli with my daughter, and Denis, the painter—it was a charming party. We first visited the cascades, which enchanted me so much the gentlemen could hardly induce me to leave. I sketched them in chalk. The mountain which rises to the left, covered with olives, completed the charm from this point of view.

When at last we left the cascades, Ménageot led us through a rough little path to the temple of the Sybil, where we dined with very good appetite ; after which I lay down to rest and take my afternoon siesta under the columns of the Temple. From thence I heard the sound of the cascades, which soothed me deliciously ; for this sound has nothing harsh like so many others that I detest. Without speaking of the terrible noise of thunder, there are several which I find are quite unbearable, and which I can describe from the impression they convey to my nerves. There is the dull noise, the sharp noise ; and there are some which are always agreeable, such as that of the waves on the sea-shore, for example, which is always

lulling and fills me with sweet musings. I think I should be able to write a treatise on the sounds I have heard during my life, and to which my attention has been drawn. But to return to Tivoli. We slept at the inn, and early next morning returned to the cascades where I finished my sketch. After this we visited the Grotto of Neptune ; from the height above falls an enormous quantity of water, which after boiling over the blocks of black stone, goes to form a large, tranquil and clear sheet further on. We then entered the cave, which is a mass of mossy rocks over which the cascades fall, making the cavern highly picturesque. From this and near the cavern we found another cascade, which was visible under the arch of the bridge—I sketched it also ; for all artists must feel as I did, that it is impossible to walk round Rome without feeling the desire to use one's pencil ; I have never made the smallest excursion, not even a walk without bringing back some sketches I have made. Every place was good as a site, any paper suited me for making a sketch. I recollect, for example, that during my stay in Rome, I received a letter from M. Laborde, which enclosed a letter of exchange for 18,000 francs on his banker in Rome, in payment for two pictures I had sold him before leaving France. Having no immediate need of the money, I did not at once make use of it, which (you will see) was a great mistake ; finding myself one evening on the terrace of the Trinité-du-Mont, I was struck with the beauty of the sunset ; and as I had no other paper with me save the letter of M. Laborde, quite covered with writing, I took the letter of exchange which was inside, and sketched on the back of

it the beautiful sunset. Three years afterwards when at Turin, on my way back to France, I got on "account" at a banker's there 10,000 francs, which owing to the bad exchange on Paris was only worth 8,000 francs. In consequence of this on my arrival in Paris, M. Alexandre Laborde being unwilling, or perhaps unable, to pay the 8,000 francs still due, we cancelled the agreement, he returned me my two pictures, and I gave him back the letter of exchange with my sunset sketched on the outside.

M. Ménageot took us to visit the Villa Aldobrandini, with its superb park, and fine fountains. From the casino, which is on high ground, the view is magnificent. On one side one can see the ancient aqueducts which cross the Roman Campagna; on the other lie the sea, and the beautiful line of the Apennines, and below again, Tusculum. We went to visit this ruined town, which was built on a mountain. It was sad to see the masses of stone which once formed houses, the ruined walls straggling on the ground. The only part which remained standing was the court where Cicero held his school. These mournful sights give rise to sad thoughts.

On leaving Tusculum we visited Monte Cavi, where we had to ascend through a forest of trees to the summit, in order to see the remains of a temple of Jupiter which is said to have been built by Tarquinius Superbus.

We also visited the Villa Conti, with its beautiful groves of trees; then on to the Villa Pallavicini, where the casino is superb, and the apartments very fine. Still further on we came upon a chapel in which was an image of Sainte Victoire, very well dressed, and in a shrine. The little boy

who drew aside the curtain which covered it, accidentally moved the Saint, and I thought my daughter would have died from fright. We finished this excursion by a visit to the Villa Bracciano, which I thought beautiful.

The recollection which I retain of these superb villas interests me far less than that of the grand ruin which is called the Villa Adriana. Notwithstanding the enormous *débris* that cover the ground on which this vast antique palace was built, one can still judge of its beauties ; it is nine miles in circumference, its walls alone attest its ancient magnificence, and one may form an idea of the marvels which have been taken from it, on seeing the numbers of antique statues which at the present time adorn the Villa d'Este, the Capitol, and so many of the palaces of Rome. "Adrian," says M. de Lalande in his "Travels in Italy," had "imitated in his palace all that the art of bygone times had devised. One sees there a lyceum, an academy, the Portico and Temple of Thessaly, the Piscina of Athens, &c., &c. A double portico of great length and height had been constructed to ward off the fierce heat of the sun at all hours of the day. Twenty-five niches built in the walls of the library, had no doubt contained as many statues." One recognises in these famed ruins the excellent arrangement of the apartments which are of vast size. The exterior and interior decorations have always been the admiration of architects, as much for their style as for their execution. We, alas ! are very far removed from such elegance and grandeur.

It was with regret I left this place of splendour and ruin. Ah ! what thoughts it gives rise to, and how our

greatest works crumble into decay. Since the beginning of the world the marvels of the heavens alone remain unchanged. How can one feel pride, when each step that one takes in the environs of Rome reveals the instability of earthly things ; for there one tramples under-foot the chefs-d'œuvre of antiquity. I remember one day walking near the city with the Duchesse de Fleury, we entered a villa where the garden was like a wilderness. We found several workmen pulling down a small house in which several statues and vases had been discovered, and these they threw down without the least precaution. We were furious against the proprietor, who had evidently left no one to superintend his workpeople, and we decided on finding him out in order to stop this massacre ; but we discovered he was absent from Rome, and we could do nothing to save these interesting discoveries.

One place that I had a great affection for was the summit of Monte Mario, on which is situated the Villa Mellini. I am told that on making the road up to it, they found quantities of oyster shells and a wheel similar to those used in the present day. One sees here on the roadside enormous trunks of felled trees ; these trees were once those that grew in the sacred forest, leading to the ancient temple in the spot where the casino is now, and which is also abandoned. From the top of the mountains one can see the beautiful line of the Apennines ; this view is so magnificent, the air is so good, and I felt so happy there, that after having come the first time with M. Ménageot, I returned several times by myself, and in order that I might stay there some time, my ser-

vant brought my dinner in a basket. My dinner consisted of a chicken ; but as there was a sort of a farm close by, I used to get from thence fresh eggs, which I added to my repast. I cannot describe the enjoyment I derived in contemplating the line of the Apennines, at the hour when the setting sun touched them with rainbow tints ! The celestial blue of the sky, the pure air, the complete solitude, all exalted my soul ; I addressed to heaven a prayer for France, for my friends, and God knows how I despised all the pettiness of the world, for as the poet Le Brun says :

“ L'âme prend la hauteur des cieux qui l'environnent.”

M. Ménageot had cautioned me never to walk alone in narrow and lonely paths, so my servant accompanied me ; but I always made him keep at a distance, more particularly as his shoes made a most disagreeable noise. For this reason, I said to him one day : “ Germain, please to keep at a distance; you prevent me from thinking.” So the poor man who had nothing better to do, amused himself by watching every person who came near me, and accosted them by saying : “ Do not go near Madame, it prevents her thinking,” which many of my acquaintances repeated to me in the evening.

When the heat became insupportable at Rome, I made several excursions in the environs, wishing to find a house for myself and the Duchesse de Fleury. I went first to *A* Riccia, and took a lovely walk in the woods, which are superb and very picturesque—there are so many beautiful old trees, and a pretty fountain. After wandering about

some time, we took a house at Genesano² which was exactly what we required. The house had belonged to Carlo Maratta;* one could see on the walls of the grand salon several compositions traced by him, which made it very precious to me. The Duchess and myself lived there together most comfortably.

As soon as we were settled, our excursions in the neighbourhood began. We hired three donkeys, for my daughter was always with us; we went first to the lake of Albano, which is very spacious, and the heights which surround it are delicious. This promenade goes by the name of the Gallery of Albano. However, we soon preferred the borders of the charming lake Nemi, to the left of which is a temple of Diana, the basement of which is covered by the water. This lake is twelve miles in circumference, and surrounded by such rich vegetation that the pathway is a mass of scented flowers. Above the lake lies the town of Nemi with its tower and aqueduct. Once I saw a procession wind along the mountain path out of the town, and I never witnessed anything more picturesque. On another occasion we visited the cemetery, where rows of skulls were arranged in order; Madame de Fleury could hardly be induced to tear herself away from them; as for myself, I could not bear to look at them.

The trees around the lake of Nemi are enormous; some are so old that their trunks and branches are whitened by

* Carlo Maratta, called Carlo della Madonne, was a celebrated painter of the Roman school, born at Camerano in 1625, and died at Rome in 1713.

time. One night we made a party to go and see them by moonlight, and my daughter insisted on accompanying us. You cannot imagine anything more charming than the effect produced by these trees throwing their shadows on the still waters of the lake. We remained a long time lost in admiration ; but suddenly the trees becoming agitated by the wind, appeared to take the form of menacing spectres ; my poor child was terribly frightened, and trembling said to me : " They are living, mother, I assure thee they are living."

In certain circumstances, I must own, my companion and myself were not much more brave than my daughter, as witness the following adventure : having one day gone together for a walk in the woods of Riccia, in order to reach a lonely valley near there, we went along a lonely pathway in which to the right hand and left were ancient tombs covered with ivy. All at once we perceived walking behind us a man who had all the appearance of a brigand. We hastened our steps, the man did the same ; in our terror, wishing to make believe that our servants were not far off, the Duchesse called Francisco, and I, Germain ; but the man only came nearer, and feeling too sure that the men whom we called for would not come, we began to run with all our might, in order to regain the public road which was at the top of the mountain. I never found out if the man who forced us to take such a breathless race was a brigand or simply a wayfarer.



CHAPTER V.

I leave for Naples—The Husband of Madame Denis, the Niece of Voltaire—The Comte and Comtesse Scawronski—Sir William Hamilton—Lady Hamilton—Her Story and Attitudes—The Hotel of Morocco, Chiaja—The Farnese Hercules.



HAD been in Rome for nearly eight months, when seeing that all the visitors were leaving for Naples, I decided on going there also. I mentioned my project to the Cardinal de Bernis, who whilst approving, counselled me not to go there alone. He mentioned a Monsieur Duvivier, married to the niece of Voltaire, the widow of M. Denis, who intended taking the journey, and who would be delighted by my accompanying him. M. Duvivier came himself to see me, and repeated all that the Cardinal had told me, and promised to take the greatest care of my daughter and myself. He added, as an additional inducement, that he had a small cooking apparatus under his carriage sufficient to roast a fowl, and which he said would be very useful, considering the bad living we should find in the best inns of Terra-cina.

These fine offers suited me exactly, and we started with the gentleman. His carriage was a large one; my daughter and her governess sat in the front seat, besides

this there was a banquette in the middle, and an enormous valet-de-chambre came and seated himself before me, in such a manner that his great shoulders touched and annoyed me. I very rarely speak while travelling, and the conversation was reduced to a few words. But, as we were crossing the Pontine Marshes, I perceived a shepherd seated on the banks of a canal, whilst his sheep browsed in a field quite carpeted with flowers, beyond which one could see the sea and Cape Circée. "This would make a charming picture," I said to my companion, "the shepherd, the sheep, the prairie, and the sea!" "These sheep are all dirty," he replied; "you should see what English sheep are like." Further on, on the road to Terracina, at the place where one has to cross a little river in a boat, I saw on the left, the line of the Apennines surrounded by superb clouds that the setting sun had lightened; I could not refrain from expressing my admiration.

"These clouds only promise us rain for to-morrow," said my companion.

On arrival at Terracina we stopped at an inn for supper, and to pass the night. We were very hungry, and I counted on the fowl M. Duvivier had promised us: but apparently it had been forgotten, for we had to content ourselves with two horrid little dishes, and we resumed our journey next morning feeling very unrefreshed. The road to Naples is charming; here and there beautiful trees are seen, and the hedges are masses of wild roses and scented myrtles. I was enchanted, though my companion said "He preferred the sunny fine slopes of Bordeaux, which

promised good wine," but I would not listen to him any more ; I decided my enthusiasm should not be frozen by this iceberg.

The following day we arrived at Naples between two and three o'clock. I cannot express the admiration I felt on entering this city. The brilliant sunshine, the sea and the islands which one perceives in the distance, Vesuvius, from whose summit rose a dense column of smoke, and then the population so animated, so noisy, and which differs so entirely from that of Rome, that one might imagine the two cities were a thousand miles apart ; everything delighted me, but perhaps the pleasure of saying good-bye to my companions added greatly to my satisfaction. I called this gentleman my "extinguisher ;" and since then I have frequently applied the term to others.

I had engaged the Hotel Morocco, situated on the Chiaja, facing the sea. Just in front of me lay the Island of Capri, and this situation charmed me. I had scarcely arrived, when the Russian Ambassador to Naples, the Comte Scawronski, sent one of his servants to inquire after me, and immediately afterwards sent me in a sumptuous dinner. I was all the more sensible of this kind attention, for I should have died of hunger before they had found the time in my house to think of cooking anything. That same evening I went to thank him, and I then made the acquaintance of his charming wife ; they both entreated me to dine with them always, and though it was impossible for me to avail myself altogether of their kind proposition, I very frequently did so during my stay at Naples, their society was so very delightful to me.

The Comte Scawronski had very noble and regular features ; he was very pale. This pallor was caused by the extreme delicacy of his health, which did not, however, prevent his being perfectly amiable, and a brilliant talker. The Comtesse was gentle and lovely as an angel ; the famous Potemkin, her uncle, had loaded her with riches of which she made no use. Her happiness was to lie stretched on a sofa, wrapped in a large black pelisse, and wearing no stays. Her mother-in-law ordered for her from Mademoiselle Bertin, *marchande de modes* to the Queen Marie Antoinette, boxes full of the most exquisite dresses. I do not believe the Comtesse ever looked at them, and when her mother-in-law entreated her to wear them, she answered carelessly : "What is the use ? for whom ? for what ?" She made me the same answer on showing me her jewel case, one of the richest imaginable ; it contained the enormous diamonds, which had been given her by Potemkin, and that I had never seen her wear. I remember her telling me, that to enable her to sleep she kept a slave under her bed, who every night told her the same story. In the day time she remained constantly idle ; she was quite uneducated, and had no conversation : in spite of all this, thanks to her lovely face and angelic sweetness, she possessed an invincible charm. Comte Scawronski was very much in love with her, and after his death, the Comtesse, whom I met again at St. Petersburg, married the Bailli de Litta, who returned to Milan to give up his appointment in order to marry this careless beauty. She had two daughters by her first husband, one of whom married the Prince Bagration.

Their society was very agreeable to me, and I passed most of my evenings at the Russian Embassy. The Count and his wife often made up a whist party with the Abbé Bertrand, who was then French Consul at Naples. The Abbé was deformed in every sense of the term, and I do not know by what fatality it was that, as soon as I was seated near him, the song of the hump-backed always ran in my head. I had great difficulty in turning my mind from the subject. At last, one evening my pre-occupation became such that I began to hum quite loudly the unfortunate song ; I stopped short suddenly, and the Abbé turning towards me in the most amiable manner, said : "Go on, Madame, go on, it does not wound me in the least." I cannot conceive how I could have committed such a breach of good manners ; and I can never forgive myself.

Comte Scawronski had made me promise to paint his wife before anyone else at Naples ; I agreed, and two days after my arrival, I commenced the portrait of the Ambassadors almost full length, holding in her hand a medallion in which was the portrait of her husband. I had given my first sitting, when I received a visit from the English Ambassador, Sir William Hamilton, who begged as a favour that the first portrait I took at Naples should be that of a beautiful woman he presented to me ; it was Mrs. Hart, his mistress, who shortly afterwards became Lady Hamilton, and whose beauty has made her celebrated. After the promise given to my amiable neighbours, I would not commence this portrait until that of the Comtesse Scawronski was already far advanced. I

also took a fresh portrait of Lord Bristol, whom I found again at Naples; one may say he passed his life on Vesuvius, for he ascended the mountain every day.

I painted Mrs. Hart as a Bacchante reposing on the sea-shore, and holding in her hand a cup. Her lovely face was very animated, and was a complete contrast to that of the Countess; she had an enormous quantity of beautiful chestnut hair, which when loose covered her entirely—thus as a Bacchante she was perfect.

Sir William Hamilton had this portrait done for himself; but I must mention that he frequently sold his pictures when he found he could make money on them, which caused the eldest son of our Ambassador at Naples, M. de Talleyrand, to say one day on hearing that Sir William Hamilton was a patron of art: "Say rather it is art who is his patron." The truth is that after having bargained a long time for the portrait of his mistress, he got me to do it for a hundred louis, which was 2,400 francs, and that he sold it afterwards in London for three hundred guineas, or in French money 8,000 francs. Later on when I had again painted Lady Hamilton as a sybil for the Duc de Brissac, I made a copy of the head as a present to Sir William Hamilton, who without hesitation sold it.

The life of Lady Hamilton is a romance; she was called Emma Lyon, sometimes Mrs. Hart. Her mother is reported to have been only a poor servant; at thirteen years of age she entered a tradesman's family at Hawarden as nurse, but tired of the obscurity in which she lived, and fancying that in London she would get a better situa-

tion, she went there. The Prince of Wales told me he had seen her at that time standing in clogs at a fruiterer's door, and though very poorly dressed, her lovely face had attracted his attention.

A retailer in the market took her into his service, but she soon left him to become maid to a lady of good family and position. In this house she acquired the taste for theatres. She studied the attitudes, the inflections in the voice of actors, and imitated them perfectly. This talent did not please or suit her mistress, who dismissed her in consequence.

It was then that having heard of a tavern much frequented by artists, she decided on going there to seek for employment. Her beauty was at its height ; and besides she was very steady. In this situation she soon fell away from the path of virtue, and after being abandoned by different lovers, found herself reduced to the lowest stage of degradation. A strange chance drew her out of the abyss. A Dr. Graham hired her to show her at his house, under the name of the Goddess of Health ; she was only covered with a thin veil ; crowds of people went to see her, artists especially were charmed with her. Some time after this exhibition, a painter, by name Romney, took her as his model ; he put her in a thousand graceful attitudes and placed her in his pictures. It was there she acquired that habit of being able to change her expression in a moment, which afterwards made her so celebrated. Nothing in fact was more curious than to watch the facility which Lady Hamilton had of expressing in her features either joy or sorrow, and of imitating different persons. One

moment she would be a delightful bacchante, with animated eyes, and hair in disorder, then all at once her face would express sorrow, and you saw a beautiful repentant Magdalen. The day Sir W. Hamilton introduced her to me, he wished me to see her perform ; I was enchanted, but she being dressed in the prevailing fashion, it shocked me. I made her get more artistic clothes, and with shawls which she knew so well how to drape, one could have painted quite a gallery of pictures from her different attitudes and expressions.

To return to the romantic life of Emma Lyon, it was whilst she was with the painter I have just mentioned, that Lord Greville, a son of the noble family of Warwick, fell so desperately in love with her, that he wished to marry her, when in 1779 he suddenly lost his place under government, and his fortune. He started immediately for Naples in the hope of obtaining assistance from his uncle, Sir William Hamilton, and took Emma with him, the better to plead his cause with this relative. The uncle consented to pay his debts, on condition that Emma should belong to him. I have these details from Lord Greville himself. Emma thus became Sir William Hamilton's mistress, till the spring of 1781, when he decided on marrying her, in spite of the remonstrances of his family. He said to me, on leaving for London : "She shall be my wife in spite of them ; after all it is for myself I marry her."

Thus, it was as Lady Hamilton that he brought her back to Naples a short time afterwards, and she became as grand a lady as could be. It is asserted that the Queen

of Naples was very intimate with her, and it is true that the Queen saw her, but it may be said only politically. Lady Hamilton being very indiscreet, put her *au courant* of a host of little diplomatic secrets, which Her Majesty made use of for the affairs of the kingdom.

Lady Hamilton was not at all witty, though very sarcastic and ill-natured, and these two faults were the moving spring of her conversation; she was very crafty, and succeeded in getting married by exercising all her cunning. She had no style, and dressed badly as a rule. I remember that the first time I took her portrait, at my third sitting at her house at Caserta, the Duchesse de Fleury and Princesse Joseph de Monaco were present. I had arranged a shawl round her head in the form of a turban, one end of which fell in graceful drapery. This head-dress suited her so well, that the ladies thought her exquisitely beautiful. Sir W. Hamilton having invited us all to stay to dinner, Mrs. Hart (for she was not then married) left us for a short time in order to change her dress, and when she again entered the salon, her dress, which was of the most vulgar description, had so entirely changed her appearance to her disadvantage that the two ladies could scarcely recognise her.

When I visited London in 1802, Lady Hamilton had just lost her husband. I left my card at her house, and she came at once attired in the deepest mourning to see me. She wore an immense black veil, and had cut off all her beautiful hair to dress it *à la Titus*, which was then the fashion. I found this Andromache enormous; for she had become horribly fat. She told me weeping, that she

was much to be pitied, for in Sir William she had lost both a friend and a father, and that she should never be consoled. I confess that her grief made very slight impression on me ; for I thought I could perceive she was playing a part, more especially, as a few minutes afterwards, seeing some music lying on my piano, she began to sing one of the airs she found amongst it.

Every one knows that, whilst at Naples, Lord Nelson was very much in love with her. She kept up a most tender correspondence with him ; and one morning when I went to see her, finding her radiant with joy and wearing a rose in her hair like Nina, I asked her why she had placed it there. "It is because I have just received a letter from Lord Nelson," she replied.

The Duc de Berri and the Duc de Bourbon, having heard of her attitudes, expressed a great wish to see her perform, which she had always declined doing in London. I begged her to give me an evening for the two Princes. I also invited a few other Frenchmen who I knew were very curious to witness the scene ; and I placed in the centre of my drawing-room a very large frame, enclosed on the right and left by two screens. I had arranged the light so as to shine on Lady Hamilton, as one would light up a picture. Everyone having arrived, Lady Hamilton went through numerous attitudes inside the frame, in a truly admirable manner. She had with her a child, between seven and eight years of age, and who resembled her greatly. I am informed that the child was the daughter of Lord Nelson. She brought her into the tableaux, and recalled to me the picture by Poussin, of the "Rape of the Sabine

women." She passed from sorrow to joy, and from joy to terror, so splendidly, that we were all enchanted.

As she remained to supper, the Duc de Bourbon, who was seated by my side, made me remark the quantity of porter she drank. She must have been well accustomed to it, for she was not tipsy even after two or three bottles. A long while after I left London, in 1815, I heard that Lady Hamilton had died at Calais in great misery and loneliness.

I have taken my reader far from Naples in 1790 ; so I must go back there.

I was delighted with my residence at the Hotel Morocco, to say nothing of my kind friends being so near me. From my windows I revelled in the most magnificent view and the gayest thoroughfare. The sea, with the island of Capri in front of me, Vesuvius to the left, which promised an eruption from the quantity of smoke it emitted ; to the right the hill of Pausilippo, covered with beautiful villas, and superb vegetation, then the quay of the Chiaja always so animated, and which presented so many and amusing pictures ; sometimes it was the lazzaroni who came to quench their thirst at the fountain in front of my windows, where the young washerwomen came to wash their clothes ; on Sundays it was the young peasants, in their finest costumes, who danced the tarantella before my house, playing the tamborine ; and every evening I could see the fishermen with their torches, whose light was reflected in the sea. Beyond my bed-room was an open verandah which looked into a garden of orange trees in full flower ; but as everything in this world has its drawback, my rooms

had one, which I was obliged to make the best of. For many hours every morning I was unable to open my windows facing the quay, as underneath them an itinerant cooking place was posted, where the women cooked their dinner, generally of tripe fried in horribly bad oil, the odour of which came into my rooms. I was obliged therefore to look at the sea through closed windows. How beautiful is the Bay of Naples ; I have frequently passed hours of the night in contemplating it, when its waves were calm and silvery from the reflection of a superb moon. I frequently took a boat, in order to enjoy the magnificent coup-d'œil which the city presents from the sea, and which rises as an amphitheatre. Sir William Hamilton had a small casino on the shore where I frequently dined. He used to throw pence into the sea for young boys to dive for, and when I had begun to tremble for their safety, as they remained so long under the water, they would re-appear triumphantly holding the money in their mouths. This little casino recalls to my remembrance another trait of Sir William Hamilton. One day when I was there I drew on the upper panels of the door, in chalk, two cherub's heads ; I was much surprised to see them again in England at Lord Warwick's. He had had the panels cut out and sold my sketches ; I do not recollect for what amount. The beautiful public garden of the Villa Reale is on the Chiaja, and becomes in the evening a delightful promenade.



CHAPTER VI.

The Baron Talleyrand—Island of Capri—Vesuvius—Ischia and Procida—The Mont St. Nicolas—Portraits of the eldest daughters of the Queen of Naples—Portrait of the Prince Royal—Paësiello—Nina—Pausilippo.



IMMEDIATELY on my arrival at Naples, I called on M. le Baron Talleyrand, then French Ambassador to the Court, who showed me every kindness throughout my stay there. I found the amiable Portuguese Madame Silva was still with him, and together we planned numerous excursions. We first of all visited the island of Capri. The eldest son of M. de Talleyrand and the Comte de la Roche-Aymon accompanied us. They had hired two musicians, one to sing and the other to play the guitar. We embarked at midnight by the light of a beautiful moon ; but the sea was very rough, the great waves seemed as though they would engulf us at every moment, and I confess I nearly died of fright. As an excuse I must mention that I had never made so long a voyage before, my only previous experience being at Mordit, where the crossing is very short.

When we had fairly put off from the shore, M. de Talleyrand told his musicians to sing ; but the two poor fel-

lows were so dreadfully sea-sick, it was impossible for them to attempt it. Madame Silva and the young Baron were also very ill ; M. de la Roche-Aymon and myself were only slightly uncomfortable.

At last after having been tossed incessantly by these terrible waves, we landed shortly after sunrise on the island of Capri. We found there only a few fishermen, who inhabited the caverns in the rocks on the sea-shore. One of them offered himself as our guide, and we hired donkeys, as we wished to ascend to the highest peak of the island, the platform of St. Michel, where we enjoyed a splendid view of the sea and mainland, with Vesuvius, and the adjacent mountains. It was here that the palace of Tiberius stood, of which there remains one broken column. It was from this great height that Tiberius had not only his slaves, but all those who displeased him thrown into the sea.

We were shown a pretty house which had been built for an invalid Englishman, who had long been given over by the medical men at Naples. Having followed their advice and taken up a residence at Capri, he lived there for more than twenty years without any suffering.

After having greatly enjoyed the reviving air and charming scenery, we returned to Naples, much pleased with our expedition, with the exception however of the young Baron de Talleyrand, who received a rare reprimand from his father, for having taken the voyage in such bad weather and in so fragile a boat.

What I desired more than anything else was to make the ascent of Vesuvius, and I induced Madame Silva and the Abbé Bertrand to accompany me.

I will now copy the end of a letter I wrote from Naples to my friend M. Brongniart, the architect, as the impression made on me by the terrible phenomena was at that time more recent and more vivid.

“ Now I must tell you of my various expeditions up Vesuvius.

“The first time my companions and myself were caught in a frightful storm, accompanied by rain, which resembled the deluge. We were drenched, but none the less we continued our road towards a portion of the summit, where we could see one of the great streams of lava running at our feet. I seemed to be standing near one of the entrances to the infernal regions, for the stream of fire, which suffocated me, was nine miles in extent. The bad weather on that day prevented our going further, and the smoke and quantity of cinders which covered us, made the summit of the mountain invisible. The thunders of heaven and the mountain mingled together continually, the noise was terrific, and as we were precisely under the cloud, we all trembled lest the movement of our party returning should attract the lightning.

“I reached my house in a pitiable condition ; my dress was simply a drenched cinder ; I was nearly dead with fatigue ; and went to bed rejoicing.

“Far from being discouraged by my first attempt, a few days afterwards I made my second venture up my dear Vesuvius. This time my little brunette* accompanied

* Madame Vigée Le Brun habitually called her daughter by this name.

me ; I wanted her to see this grand spectacle. Monsieur de la Chenaye and two other persons joined us. The weather was perfect. Before nightfall we were on the mountain, to see the ancient streams of lava and watch the sunset on the sea. The volcano was more furious than ever, and as in the day time no fire can be seen, we watched the shower of cinders and lava pouring out of the crater, and remarked the beautiful hue the setting sun threw over the scene.

“We mounted to the Hermitage. The sun set gloriously behind the islands of Ischia and Procida ; what a view ! Then night came on, and the smoke was transformed into flames, the most beautiful sight imaginable. Tongues of fire darted from the crater, sending out great stones from the mouth, and the earth shook beneath our feet. I was really a little frightened ; but did not allow myself to show it, on account of my poor little girl, who said to me crying : ‘Mamma, must I be frightened ?’

“This grand scene of destruction was so imposing and awful, that I could not refrain from continually looking back on my return journey to Naples, to see again and again these tongues and streams of fire. Give me some news of yourself, and of our friends, &c.”

Since that letter, I frequently visited Vesuvius, and on one occasion was almost lost in a fog.

One of the most charming excursions that I made in the environs of Naples was with Sir W. Hamilton and Mrs. Hart ; we visited the islands of Ischia and Procida, and were absent five days. The weather was lovely ; the sea was like a lake, so calm and still.

At half-past nine o'clock we reached Procida, and immediately took a walk, during which I was struck with the beauty of the women we met on the road. Nearly all of them were tall, and their costumes as well as their faces, recalled the Grecian type of women. There were very few nice houses, the cultivation in the island consisting of vines and fruit trees. We dined at noon with the Governor; from the terrace of his house, one could see Cape Misenum, the Elysian fields, and in fact all that Virgil has described; these different points of view are sufficiently near to enable one to distinguish the details, and Vesuvius is seen in the distance.

After dinner we again entered our boat in order to reach Ischia by six o'clock in the evening; the island is volcanic, and is fifteen leagues in extent, and everywhere one can observe extinct craters. The hills are all cultivated. Saint Nicolas, the highest mountain in the environs of Naples, is higher than Vesuvius.

At Ischia we met many agreeable people, amongst these the family of General Baron Salis; the following morning at six o'clock, we, to the number of twenty persons, all started on donkeys, to make the ascent of Saint Nicolas, where we intended to dine. The road was very precipitous, and a dense fog coming on made it dangerous, for my donkey persisted in walking on the verge of the precipice, and I had entirely lost sight of my companions. I followed on, however, but not without commending my soul to God. One may imagine the terror I was in, and the relief to my mind, when I heard the tingle of a little bell, which I at once thought was that of the hermit

where we were all to dine. I found all the company had arrived before me, but the fog was so thick it was impossible to see anything ; but after a while the clouds broke, and a splendid sky appeared.

We were contemplating the magnificent view when General Salis came to warn us that dinner was ready, an announcement to which we were by no means indifferent, after so much fatigue and tribulation. The dinner, which he gave us, might be compared to that of Lucullus ; everything was *recherché*, nothing was wanting, even to the ices with which we ended our repast. The astonishment of the three good monks, who inhabit the rocks, and who profited by all that was left of our meal, was very entertaining.

After dinner, Madame Silva and myself took our siesta in the open air, reposing on sacks of barley, amidst the odour of broom and a thousand different flowers. Then we again mounted our donkeys to visit the other side of the island, where we saw many interesting spots and returned much pleased with our excursion.

I also visited Pæstum, and though the distance from Naples is only twenty-five leagues, yet the journey is very fatiguing ; but I felt capable of braving anything for the satisfaction of admiring monuments which are between three and four thousand years old. Of the three temples still standing, that of Juno was in a beautiful state of preservation ; from the exterior one might imagine it to be quite perfect. This temple is noble and imposing, as is everything belonging to the ancients, near whom we are but pigmies. I was much surprised on visiting Pompeii

and Herculaneum at the smallness of the houses and the temple of Isis, and must believe that the excavated part was only a suburb of the real city.

These excursions and many others did not prevent my painting a great deal at Naples. I had undertaken so many portraits, that on my first visit to that city I remained six months, though I had only intended remaining six weeks. The French Ambassador, M. le Baron de Talleyrand came one morning to announce that the Queen of Naples wanted me to take the portraits of her two eldest daughters, which I commenced without delay. Her Majesty was on the point of leaving for Vienna for the purpose of arranging the marriages of the Princesses. I recollect that on her return she said to me: "I had a prosperous journey, for I have happily settled two marriages for my daughters." The eldest married shortly afterwards the Emperor of Austria, Francis II., and the second, who was called Louisa, married the Grand-Duke of Tuscany. This last one was very ugly, and made such dreadful faces, that I did not wish to finish her portrait. She died a few years after her marriage.

When the Queen was gone, I painted the Prince Royal also. The hour for my sittings at the Palace was always at noon, and to get there I had to pass along the Chiaja at the hottest time of the day. The houses to the left, facing the sea, are all painted pure white, and the glare of the sun on them nearly blinded me. To save my eyes I decided on wearing a green veil, which, as I had never seen one worn by any one previously, must have appeared very singular, for the veils then worn were either white or black;

but a few days afterwards I noticed several Englishwomen imitated me, and green veils became the fashion.

I found the benefit of my green veil when at St. Petersburg, where the snow is so dazzling I should have lost my sight.

At this time I commenced the portrait of Paësiello. Whilst giving me a sitting he composed a piece of music, which was to be performed on the return of the Queen. I was charmed with this circumstance, as it enabled me to seize the traits of the great musician at the moment of inspiration.

I had been compelled to leave my dear Hôtel Morocco, because, after having admired all the day, I felt obliged to to sleep at night, and I found it impossible to close my eyes. The incessant rumbling of the carriages up and down the Chiaja was quite unbearable, and at last decided me on leaving my hotel. I settled myself again in a pretty little house quite on the sea-shore, for the waves broke underneath my windows. I was enchanted, for this sound soothed me deliciously ; but, alas ! eight days afterwards there came a storm, a tempest so violent, that the furious waves mounted even into my rooms. I was inundated, and the fear of a recurrence compelled me to leave my charming little house, much to my regret.

After having left this house, I hired one outside but quite near the city, and took possession on Christmas Eve.

The first evening, as I was just going to bed, I was all at once deafened by the explosion of quantities of squibs, which a number of boys had let off, and were throwing into my court and windows ; this amusement lasted three

days and nights. Besides this, I was almost frozen in these apartments ; as I was then engaged with the portrait of Paësiello, we had both of us to keep our fingers warm by continually breathing on them. I lighted a fire in my studio, but as in Italy more attention is bestowed in the endeavour to keep a house cool, the chimneys (mine being no exception) are so badly built, that the smoke nearly suffocated us. Our eyes streamed with water; and I can never understand how I was able to finish his portrait.

Paësiello's popularity was at its height at this time all over Italy. I often went to the Grand Opera with the Comtesse Scawronski ; and was present at the first representation of " Nina," which is certainly a master-piece ; but though the music of Paësiello is very beautiful, it did not afford me the same amount of pleasure as that of Dala-grac. The theatre of San Carlo, in which this opera was given, is the largest in Europe. I was there on the day of the Queen's fête ; it was magnificently lighted, and crowded ; the *coup-a'ail* was superb. I remember having laughed very much that day at an amusing mistake I made. Seeing the Baronne de Talleyrand seated near me, and not having seen her for some time, I crossed over to her box to pay her a visit. She said to me : " The Ambassadress has had a great sorrow, she has lost Nigi." As I at once concluded it was of a friend she spoke, I lost no time in going to see her. I was quite struck with the change in her countenance ; she appeared so sad, I began to think it must have been one of her children who had died. I then said how much I felt for her in her affliction, and asked if it was the eldest she had lost. At these words,

notwithstanding her grief, she burst out laughing, and told me it was her dog that was dead.

One of my greatest pleasures was to walk on the beautiful hill of Pausilippo, under which runs the tunnel of the same name, which is a magnificent work of three miles in length, and which one can see was built by the Romans. On this hill is situated the tomb of Virgil. In the evenings I walked on the sea-shore, accompanied by my child, whose education was my greatest care, and I procured for her the best masters. She showed a decided talent for languages, but preferred to all others the German. Her favourite recreation was writing novels, and I remember that at the age of nine years, when at Vienna, she wrote a little romance remarkable for its style and composition.





CHAPTER VII.

I return to Rome—The Queen of Naples—I return to Naples—Fête of the Madonna de l'Arca—Fête of the Pied de Grotte—Solfaterra—Pozzuoli—Cape of Misenum—Portrait of the Queen of Naples—Character of this Princess—My Return to Rome—Mesdames de France, Aunts of Louis XVI.



ALL the portraits I had undertaken at Naples being finished, I returned to Rome; when shortly afterwards meeting the Queen of Naples, who was returning from Vienna, she begged me with the most gracious and amiable manner to return to Naples in order to take her portrait. It was impossible to refuse, so I speedily put myself again *en route*.

What consoled me most for all these goings and comings was the thought that there still remained many interesting and curious things to see in this beautiful country. Sir William Hamilton took a pleasure in doing me the honours, and immediately on my arrival, he hastened to conduct me to the Madonna de l'Arca, which for its originality, distinguishes it above all other village festivals. The square in front of the church was covered with stalls containing sweets, and cakes, and images of the Virgin, and groups of people in the different costumes of their cantons,

some richly embroidered in gold. All the crowd entered the church to hear mass. Sir William Hamilton, Mrs. Hart and myself placed ourselves near a little chapel where was a picture of the Virgin as black as ink. The peasantry, both male and female, continually knelt before it to solicit some favour, or return thanks for one. They expressed their wishes in so loud a voice, that we could hear their petitions quite easily. First a handsome man, with bare throat, came to return thanks for his child's restoration to health. After him came a woman who scolded the Madonna furiously, for allowing her husband to ill-treat her. I was suffocating with laughter, and Sir William had to continually remind me to restrain my feelings, as he assured me I should be very badly treated myself if I did not. After this woman, two young girls came, and asked on their knees that the Madonna would give them husbands. This went on for an hour in the most entertaining manner. As soon as each had finished speaking, a bell was rung in the middle of the church, which announced to the suplicants apparently that their prayer was granted, for they went away quite contented.

After the mass, all these good people met in the square before the church to dance the tarantella ; no one could form an idea of this dance, without having seen it, no dance resembling it in any way.

I also went to another fête, much more celebrated than the one I have just described ; it was the fête of the Pied de Grotte. According to tradition, it was thus named by a hermit, who was ordered by the Virgin, who appeared to him, to build a chapel on this spot. It is very fashion-

able, as the royal family visit it each year in state to say their prayers ; the light horse and royal regiments accompanying their Majesties, as also all the nobility. This fête is held in so much veneration that the inhabitants of the provinces, belonging to the kingdom of Naples, insist in the marriage contracts of their daughters that they should be allowed to go at least once to the festival of the Virgin of the Pied de Grotte.

I went accompanied by M. Amaury Duval, brother of M. Alexandre Duval, the dramatic author, and M. Sacant, both secretaries of legation at Naples, to visit Solfaterra, which was then in eruption. It was in the month of June, and the sun beat down upon our heads, whilst we walked on the burning cinders. In my life I never suffered so much from heat. To complete my misery, I had my daughter with me ; I covered her with my dress, but this was a very slight protection, and I trembled at each step, dreading to see her fall insensible from the heat. She repeatedly said :

“Mamma, one can die of heat, is it not so?”

God knows the agony I was in at having brought her. At last we reached a little hut, in which we could rest. The heat had so nearly suffocated us that none of us could speak or move for some time. At the end of a quarter of an hour M. Duval remembered that he had an orange in his pocket, which made us shout for joy ; for this orange was like manna in the desert.

When we were sufficiently rested, we walked down to Pozzuoli where we partook of an excellent dinner of fish. The amphitheatre, though in ruins, is very curious and

interesting ; after dinner we hired a boat to take us to the promontory of Misenum. There we trod under our feet the most beautiful pieces of the most precious marbles ; for Misenum was entirely destroyed by the Lombards and Saracens ; the only thing that remains is the grand souvenir of Pliny.

Directly after my arrival in Naples, I had commenced the portrait of the Queen ; this time the heat was so great, that one day Her Majesty, who had given me a sitting, fell asleep, and I did the same. The Queen of Naples, without being as pretty as her youngest sister the Queen of France, resembled her very much ; her face was worn ; but one could see she had been handsome ; her hands and arms were perfection as to colour and form. This princess, who has had so much said and written against her, was in her own circle of a very affectionate disposition : her generosity was truly royal. The Marquis de Bombelles, ambassador to Venice in 1790, was the only French ambassador who refused to take the oath to the Constitution ; the Queen having heard that by this noble and courageous conduct M. de Bombelles, who had a large family, was reduced to the most cruel straits, wrote him a letter in her own hand, congratulating him on his fidelity, and praying him to accept a pension of twelve thousand francs. Three of M. de Bombelles' children are at the time I write this in brilliant positions. The eldest, Comte Louis de Bombelles, is Austrian Minister to Switzerland ; the second, Comte Charles, is Master of the Household to the Empress Marie-Louise ; and the third, Comte Henri, is Austrian Minister to Turin. Besides this

generous action of the Queen of Naples, I know many others which do honour to her heart ; she loved to minister to those in sorrow, and was not afraid of mounting up to a fifth floor to give aid to the unfortunate. This was the noble woman against whom, under Bonaparte, were exhibited in the streets of Paris the most infamous and obscene engravings. It was necessary to calumniate her, they wanted her crown. One knows that she was betrayed by those whom she had always honoured by her friendship and confidence. The woman whom she had loved best corresponded with the conqueror who succeeded, by underhand dealings, in dethroning the sister of Marie Antoinette, to put in her place Madame Murat.

The Queen of Naples had a noble disposition, and was very clever. She bore the whole weight of the Government. The King would not reign ; he remained nearly always at Caserta, occupied by manufactures ; the work-women employed, it is said, composed his seraglio.

The Queen having heard that I was about to return to Rome, sent for me, and said : "I am very sorry that Naples is not able to keep you longer."

Then she offered me a small house on the sea-shore, if I would only be induced to remain ; but I was longing to see Rome again, and I refused with all the gratitude so much kindness inspired. At last, after having paid me munificently, as I was taking farewell of her, she gave me a beautiful box of old lacquered work marked with her initials, surrounded by very fine diamonds. This gift was worth ten thousand francs ; but I shall never part with it.

Magnificent though the country was, which I was on the point of leaving, it would not have suited me to pass my life in it. There are too many disagreeables attached to a residence at Naples; for first one has to overcome the terror inspired by the volcanos, the daily fear of earthquakes and eruptions, to say nothing of the pestilence, which during the great heat is always more or less active in the vicinity of the city. All these things are unpleasant, one must own; but if they did not exist, who would not live in such a delicious climate?

Sir W. Hamilton, who for twenty years was English Ambassador to Naples, thoroughly knew the manners and customs of the highest society in this city. What he told me, I must confess was not favourable to the Neapolitan nobility, but since then, no doubt everything is much changed. According to him, the Neapolitan ladies were surprisingly ignorant; they read nothing, though they made pretence of doing so; for one day, calling on one of them, and seeing a book in her hand, he saw on going up to her that she held it upside down. Having no sort of education, many amongst them do not even know that there are any other countries besides Naples, and their only occupation is love, which for them often changes its object.

What I saw myself was, that the ladies gesticulate much in speaking, that the only exercise they take is in a carriage, never on foot. Every evening they go to the theatre, and receive visits in their boxes, which to my mind is not half so agreeable as seeing one's friends at home.

The people of the lower classes are most noisy in their

cries, and wild in their gestures. I once watched a funeral procession pass beneath my windows, consisting of the friends and acquaintances of the deceased ; the men and women groaned aloud in the most lamentable manner. The widow followed, uttering the most frightful screams, and wringing her hands. I was told that this was only according to custom.

One ought, if possible, to witness the expression on the faces of the people on the great festival of St. Januarius. The desire and impatience depicted on their countenances are wonderful. Then, as soon as the miracle is accomplished, every face is filled with joy and delight.

The most singular specimens of the Neapolitan population are the Lazzaroni. These people have simplified living to such an extent that they are always homeless, and exist on the smallest amount of food ; they lie about on the steps of the churches, under the shadows of the walls, and on the sea-shore. They are scantily clothed, and their children are naked to the age of twelve. I was at first both scandalized and horrified to see them in this condition playing about on the Chiaja, where carriages are always passing, for this road is the regular promenade of all the society of Naples ; but I soon became accustomed to the sight.

The destitution of the Lazzaroni does not however make them thieves ; they are perhaps too lazy for that, besides having need of so little to enable them to live. The greater number of the thefts committed at Naples are by the hired servants of all nations who find their way there.

I bade adieu to the beautiful bay of Naples, the charming hills of Pausilippo and terrible Vesuvius with regret, and left for the third time to visit my dear Rome, and admire Raffaele again in all his glory. When there, I undertook a great many portraits, which to tell the truth only partially satisfied me. I greatly regretted not having been able to employ my time, either at Naples or Rome, in painting pictures of subjects which inspired me. I had been named a member of all the Academies of Italy, which encouraged me to merit such flattering distinctions, and I was going to leave nothing in this lovely country which would add much to my reputation as an artist. These ideas were constantly on my mind—I have more than one sketch in my portfolio which could furnish the proof ; but the want of money, as I had not one penny left of what I earned in France, and the natural weakness of my character, made me undertake engagements to the weary task of portrait painting. The result is that after having devoted my youth to work, with a constancy and assiduity very rare in a woman, loving my art as much as my life, I can scarcely count four works (portraits included) with which I am really pleased.

Many of the portraits which I took in Rome during my last stay there, however, procured me some gratification, amongst others, that of seeing again Mesdames de France, the aunts of Louis XVI., who at once asked me to take their portraits. I was aware that a lady artist, who had always been inimical to me, had tried to injure me in the estimation of these princesses ; but the extreme kindness with which they treated me, assured me how little effect

these vile calumnies had produced on them. I commenced by taking the portrait of Madame Adelaide ; and afterwards that of Madame Victoire.

This princess on giving me her last sitting said :

“I have just received some news which has filled me with joy ; for I learn that the King has succeeded in leaving France, and I have just written to him putting the address only : A sa Majesté le Roi de France ; they will soon know where to find him,” she added smiling.

I returned home greatly delighted, and told the good news to my daughter and her governess, who thought like myself ; but in the evening we heard my servant, a very morose man, singing, which he had never done before ; we also knew him to be a revolutionist. We at once exclaimed : “Some misfortune has happened to the King !” which was confirmed the very next day, when we heard of his arrest at Varennes, and his return to Paris. The greater number of our servants were Jacobite spies, which explains how they knew sooner than we did all that passed in France.





CHAPTER VIII.

I leave Rome—The Cascade of Terni—The Cabinet of Fontana at Florence—Sienna—Its Cathedral—Parma—My Sybil—Mantua—Giulio Romano.



LEFT Rome the 14th of April, 1792. On entering the carriage I wept bitterly. I envied the fate of all those that remained ; and on the road, when meeting travellers, I could not help crying out : “ How happy they are, for they are going to Rome ! ”

My first resting place was at Civita-Castellana. On leaving this town, the road wound amongst great rocks and precipices, and the country seemed very dismal ; but on approaching Narni, the scenery became very lovely, the roads bordered by hedges of broom and honeysuckle. We were delighted with the famous cascade of Terni. I sketched the picturesque entrance to the grotto, and carried away some pieces of the petrified rock.

I remained one day at Terni, and the following day continued our journey to Spoleto where we arrived in the evening ; it is here I saw that grand composition of Raffaele the “ Adoration of the Kings.” This picture not being finished, clearly shows the method of the divine master ; Raffaele first painted the heads and hands ; as

for the draperies he tried different tints before painting them.

After Spoleto, we passed Trevi, Cétrì, and stopped at Foligno. There I found another painting of Raffaele, one of the most beautiful and original that he ever made ; it represents the Virgin in the clouds, holding the infant Jesus in her arms. The infant is full of life, and appears in relief ; the Virgin is a noble figure ; Saint John and the Cardinal to the left of the picture, are painted in the same style as Vandyke, and the remaining figures are truly life-like.

On arriving at Perugia, which is a beautiful and celebrated town, I was induced to go and see a combat between a bull and dogs. This spectacle, which took place every six years in memory of a saint, is held in a sort of arena, in the manner of the ancients ; I can truly say it gave me no pleasure.

It was with the greatest delight I found myself again in Florence, which I had in reality only passed through on my way to Rome. I at once commenced a copy of the portrait of Raffaele, which I did *con amore*, as the Italians say, and which has never quitted my studio.

One souvenir of Florence, which I could not get rid of for a long time, was a visit I paid to the celebrated Fontana. This great anatomist* had endeavoured to repre-

* The Abbé Felix Fontana, born in 1730 at Pomerol, in Tyrol, died at Florence in 1803. Was Director of the Museum of Anatomy and Natural History of Florence. It is owing to him that the Museum of Florence has been enriched by more than 1,500 anatomical pieces, perfectly executed in wax.

sent, even to the smallest details, the interior of the human body. He showed me his cabinet, which was full of pieces of anatomy made in wax and flesh colour. I looked around me with admiration, for it is impossible to consider the structure of the human body without being convinced of the existence of a God. I had experienced no disagreeable impression till I remarked a recumbent woman, life-size, and who one might have supposed was alive. Fontana told me to go close to the figure, and then lifting a sort of covering, he exhibited to my astonished gaze all the intestines arranged as our own. This sight had such an effect on me, that I almost fainted, and for several days I could think of nothing else.

From Florence I went to Sienna, and I can never forget the beautiful evening I passed on arriving in this city, where I stayed but a short time. My custom has always been, on arriving at an inn, after ordering my supper, to take a little walk, which refreshes me after a day's travelling. The sun was just setting when I started for my first walk in Sienna. Near the inn I perceived an open door looking on to a garden and canal; I entered and seated myself to enjoy the fresh air. There I soon heard a natural concert, which ours are far from equalling. Many harmonious sounds lulled me deliciously; to the left, it was that of the cascade which filled the canal; then a light wind agitated the branches of some enormous poplars planted on the banks of the water, and a thousand birds sang their adieux to the day. I remained there more than two hours, and forgot my supper, till the servant of the inn found me, and dragged me from my enjoyment.

The following day I spent in sight-seeing. The town is very fine and beautifully situated on a hill; there are many palaces and gothic houses; amongst others is shown the house of St. Catherine and that of some other saint. The Hôtel de Ville is full of antique pictures, but what I admire above everything is the cathedral. This splendid church is gothic, very spacious, and covered with marble within and without. The roof is of azure strewn with stars; the windows are all painted, and the pavement is inlaid with subjects from the Old Testament.

On my arrival at Parma, I was immediately made a Member of the Academy, to which I gave a small head I had painted of my daughter. I left Parma the 1st of July, 1792, and went on to Mantua, which well deserved a visit. Its magnificent cathedral is the work of Giulio Romano, who, as is well known, was painter, architect and sculptor. Giulio Romano died at Mantua in 1546, but his name lives still with all its glory in this city, where he left the greater number of his masterpieces.





CHAPTER IX.

Venice—M. Denon—The Marriage of the Doge with the Sea—Madame Marini—The Palaces—Tintoretto—Paccherotti—Cemetery—Vicenza—Padua—Verona—A Conversazione.



WAS longing to see Venice, and arrived there on the eve of the Ascension. The aspect of the city surprised as much as charmed me.

At first sight one might believe it was submerged, but soon the superb palaces, built in the gothic style, the walls of which are washed by the numerous canals, enchant the beholder by their wonderful and original effect. It was long, however, before I could accustom myself to the quantities of black gondolas, which took the place of carriages. I should have preferred their being of a gayer colour ; but ambassadors alone are permitted to have coloured gondolas.

M. Denon,* whom I had known in Paris, having heard of my arrival, came at once to see me. His talent and

* The Baron Dominique-Vivant Denon, born at Châlons-sur-Saône in 1747, died at Paris 1825, was both artist, diplomatist, philosopher and lawyer. He wrote a small biography of Madame Vigée Le Brun. This sketch contains the portraits of Isabella-Teotochi Marini and of Madame Vigée Le Brun.

great knowledge of art made him a most agreeable cicerone, and I congratulated myself much on having met him again. On Ascension Day, he took me to the Grand Canal, where the marriage of the Doge with the sea takes place. The Doge and all the Members of the Senate were on board their gilded galley, called the 'Bucentaur;' the Doge drew from his finger a ring which he threw into the sea, and at the same moment the roar of a thousand guns informed the city and its environs of this ceremony, which was concluded by a mass. A crowd of visitors were present at the spectacle, amongst others Prince Augustus of England, the charming Princesse Joseph de Monaco, who was on the point of returning to France, and whom I saw at Venice for the last time.

The following day M. Denon introduced me to Madame Marini, who has since married Comte Albrigi. She was amiable and witty. She proposed to take me that evening to a *café*, which surprised me a little, not knowing the customs of the country; but I was infinitely more surprised when she said to me: "Have you no friend to accompany you?" I replied that I was alone with my daughter and her governess. "Oh, well," she said, "you must at least appear to have some one; I will lend you M. Denon, who will give you his arm, and I will take the arm of someone else; people will believe that I have quarrelled with him, as it will be for the whole time you stay here; for you could not go without a friend."

Strange as this arrangement was, it suited me admirably, since it gave me for a guide, one of our most charming Frenchmen; he was not at all good looking, which, how-

ever, had not prevented him pleasing a great many pretty women. At any rate *my friend* conducted me first to the palace to see the *chefs-d'œuvre* which Venice possesses, and which are very numerous, and afterwards the churches, which are full of the finest works of Tintoretto, Paulo Veronese, Bassano and Titian. The Church of San Marco, of whom the lion is the symbol, is in the gothic style. As for the interior, it was impossible to describe the riches which it encloses of all kinds ; its gilded roofs, its columns of jasper, alabaster, verde antique, its pictures and bas-reliefs which make of San Marco a veritable treasure-house.

The society which I most frequented at Venice was that of the Spanish Ambassadors, who was most kind and obliging to me. She took me to the theatre to witness the *début* of a very beautiful young actress of only fifteen years of age, whose singing and expression were quite astonishing. I also went to the last concert at which the celebrated Paccherotti ever sang. I must mention nevertheless that the best music I heard, whilst in Venice, was at a church.

After Paccherotti's concert, we were informed that in a room adjoining the theatre there was a famous improvisatore ; I had never heard one, so we went, but the man appeared to me as if possessed ; he ran about, yelling his improvisations with such energy that he literally dripped with perspiration ; he spoke so fast that he could hardly be understood. He quite frightened us, he looked so furious ; as for myself I thought him mad, and his talent seemed only like a frightful pantomime.

M. Denon having seen my Sybil, begged me to let him

exhibit it at his house, in order to show it to his acquaintances. It followed that many persons went to see this picture, which had a great success at Venice to my infinite satisfaction. M. Denon, also entreated me to take the portrait of his friend, Madame Marini, and I had great pleasure in doing so, for she had a lovely speaking face.

Before leaving Venice, I went with a friend of M. Denon's to visit the cemetery, and we rowed there in a gondola by the light of the moon. Our great aim was to enter the enclosure in which are the tombs of the Venetian families; but, alas! the door was locked. We managed, however, to enter through a broken bit of wall, and wandered about for a long time in silence. We had much difficulty in finding the same exit again, and were glad to find ourselves once more among the living; we hastened to rejoin our gondola and returned to the city at three in the morning.

I stopped at Vicenza, which dates its foundation B.C. 380 years. Its beautiful palaces, amongst which one remarks that of Comte Chieracati, were mostly built by Palladio and are of remarkable elegance.

I went to dine in one of these palaces. The proprietor, the Marquis —, paid me a compliment I was far from expecting: he received me in a gallery, where was a table on which lay a great many engravings; one only was placed at the top of the others, with the back upwards—curiosity induced me at once to turn it, and I saw my own likeness, which had been engraved from the one I had given to the Academy at Florence.

Padua is also situated on the Brenta. This town is very

ancient, and is supposed to have been built by Antenos, the Trojan. The Hôtel de Ville is one of the most beautiful buildings in Europe.

I passed a week at Verona, which is a large city with spacious and well planned streets. Every evening, during my stay there, I went to the *Conversazione*, this is the term applied to all assemblies in Italy ; there we all met in a gallery, the women seated on each side, and the men walking in the middle. The vivacity and gesticulations of the Italians made these réunions very amusing to an observer.

During the eight days I passed at Verona, I was obliged to change my apartments twice. In the first I had asked if there would be any noise. Not in the least," replied my hostess. But at six o'clock the next morning, I heard over my head a most outrageous noise ; I asked what it could be ? "Madame," was the reply, "it is nothing particular. It is only the village dancing-master who lodges above you, and every day the young people come to take their lesson for two hours, that is all." I found it sufficient to make me decide on going elsewhere.





CHAPTER X.

Turin—The Queen of Sardinia—Madame, wife of Louis XVIII.—
Frightful news from France—The Emigrés—M. de Rivière joins
me—Milan—Lago Maggiore—I go to Vienna—Monsieur and
Madame Bistri.



MY desire being to return to France, I went to Turin with this intention. Mesdames de France, the aunts of Louis XVI., knowing that I must pass through Turin, had been good enough to give me letters to Madame Clotilde their niece, Queen of Sardinia. They wrote that they greatly wished her to have her portrait taken by me ; consequently, as soon as I was settled, I presented myself to her Majesty. She received me kindly, at the same time told me she was sorry to disoblige her aunts ; but having entirely renounced the world, she would not be painted. What I saw of her myself entirely agreed with her words and vows ; this princess had had her hair cut off, and wore a little cap, which as well as her dress was of the simplest kind. Her thinness struck me so much the more, as I had seen her when very young before her marriage, and then her embonpoint was so prodigious that in France she went by the name of *the fat Madame*. Whether owing to a too austere devotion, or to the sorrow caused by the misfortunes of her

family, the change in her appearance was so great that she was no longer recognisable. The King having joined her in the room where she received me, I was pained to see him also so pale and thin.

After this interview I went to visit Madame, wife of Louis XVIII. Not only did she receive me most kindly, but she arranged many picturesque excursions for me in the environs of Turin with her lady-in-waiting, Madame de Gourbillon and her son. The country is very fine, but our first excursion was not a success. We set off in a broiling sun to visit a Chartreuse situated in the mountains. The ascent being very steep, we were obliged to make it on foot. After having climbed for a long time, till we were quite exhausted with fatigue, we at last reached the Chartreuse, dying of heat and hunger. The table was already spread for the monks and travellers, which greatly rejoiced us ; for one may imagine how impatient we were for our dinner. As it appeared long in coming, we thought some extraordinary preparations were being made in our honour, as Madame had recommended us to the monks in the letters she had given us for them. At last we were served with a dish of frogs in white sauce, that I took for fricasseed fowl ; but as soon as I had tasted it, hungry though I was, I could not touch it. Then they produced three other dishes, on which I quite counted ; alas ! they too were frogs, so that we were obliged to content ourselves with dry bread and water, as the monks neither give nor drink wine. I longed for an omelet, but there were no eggs in the house.

On my return from the Chartreuse I saw Porporati, who

wished me to go and stay with him. He proposed to inhabit a farm which he possessed six miles from Turin, where he had some convenient and simple rooms. I accepted his offer with joy, as I detested living in the city, and at once settled myself, with my daughter and her governess, in this charming retreat. The farm was situated in an open country surrounded by fields, and little streams bordered with different kinds of trees, which formed charming groves. My child enjoyed as much as myself this quiet existence and pure air. We went on Sundays to mass by a charming road ; the little church had a pretty porch ; surrounded by this rural scenery, it seemed as though we could pray more earnestly. In the evenings, my greatest delight was to watch the sunset surrounded by golden clouds. Here I used to dream that the Revolution would soon cease, and that I should be able to return to France. Alas ! it was in this peaceful abode that the cruellest blow struck me. The post brought me one evening a letter from my friend, M. de Rivière, my sister-in-law's brother, giving me information of the frightful occurrences of the 10th of August, with the most shocking details. I was thunderstruck ; the lovely sky, the beautiful country, seemed all at once to be covered with a funereal gloom ; in the anguish I endured, solitude became insupportable, and I decided on returning at once to Turin.

On entering the city, my God ! what did I see ? the streets, the squares, crowded with men and women of all ages, who, flying from France, sought an asylum in Turin. They arrived by thousands, and it was a piteous spectacle.

The greater number were destitute of everything, for they had barely time to escape with their lives. One of them, the Duchesse de Villeroi, then very aged, was entirely dependant on her maid-servant, who had saved a small sum of money, and who allowed her half a franc a day for her food. The King of Sardinia gave orders that these unfortunate people should be lodged and fed ; but there was not room for all. One may imagine how much this cruel sight augmented my anxieties as to what was occurring in Paris, more particularly as M. de Rivière did not arrive, though he had written to tell me to expect him at Turin.

At last, after much delay he arrived, but so horribly changed, that I could scarcely recognise him. The terrible scenes he had witnessed, had affected both mind and body. He told me that at the moment he was crossing the bridge of Beauvoisin, the people were massacring the priests with the most indescribable fury, and that he had been obliged to remain at Chambery by an attack of fever, caused by the atrocities he had seen.

I scarcely dared to ask news of my mother, brother, and M. le Brun. Nevertheless, M. de Rivière reassured me a little, by telling me my mother had not left Neuilly, that M. Le Brun remained quietly in Paris, and that my brother and his wife were in hiding.

In consequence of the disastrous news I heard from France, I gave up the idea of going there. I hired a small house in the environs of Turin. M. de Rivière, who lived with me, derived much benefit from the complete rest he enjoyed. As for myself, I went on painting. I painted a

child bathing, after my daughter, and sold it at once to Prince Ysoutpoff, who came to visit me.

Having decided on returning to Milan, and not knowing how to return in some measure the kindness Porporati had shown me, the idea occurred to me to take his daughter's portrait, whom he adored, not without reason. He was so delighted that he had it engraved at once, and gave me several proofs of it.

Half-way on the road to Milan, I was arrested for two days as a Frenchwoman. I wrote at once for a "permis de séjour" which the Comte de Wilsheck, Austrian Ambassador obtained for me. I went at once to thank him on my arrival, and was received with much kindness. He pressed me to go to Vienna, where my presence, he assured me, would give great satisfaction. As the news I continued to receive from France obliged me to postpone indefinitely my return there, I at once decided on following his advice.

My reception at Milan was very flattering; the evening of my arrival I was serenaded by the young people of the best families. I was listening to the music with the greatest pleasure, never suspecting that I was the object of this ovation, when my hostess came in to tell me, and to hope that I should remain some time at Milan.

My first visit was to the refectory of the Church of the Grazia, to see the celebrated "Last Supper," painted on the wall by Leonardo da Vinci. It is one of the masterpieces of the Italian school of painting; but it is in a sadly defaced condition, and I am told that during the

last wars of Bonaparte in Italy, the soldiers amused themselves by shooting at it.

I hastened also to see the cartoons of the School of Athens, traced by Raffaele, and I gazed at them a long time with delight.

I made many excursions in the environs of Milan, and after some days visited the Lago Maggiore, whose great extent is surrounded by mountains, and in the middle of which is situated the islands Isola Bella, Isola Madre, and Isola Pescatore. I stopped at the first, having received permission to do so from Prince Borromeo, to whom it belongs. The Madre is considered the prettiest; but on embarking with the intention of going there, the lake became so furious I was compelled to give up my project.

On my return to Milan, I went to see the cathedral, which is very beautiful. As a whole, Milan reminded me very much of Paris. The opera house (La Scala), where I heard excellent music, is immense. I went to many excellent concerts, for Milan possesses many famous singers. At the last I went to, I was seated by a beautiful Polish Countess, Madame de Bistri. In the course of conversation I mentioned my approaching departure for Vienna, and she immediately said she and her husband were also going there, and though they had not intended starting as soon as myself, they would alter their day to suit mine.

It would have been impossible to find more agreeable companions. They overwhelmed me with kindness, and I may say that both husband and wife showed the greatest

goodness of heart, for they brought with them two poor *émigré* priests, who had just escaped from the massacre at the Pont de Beauvoisin ; they befriended these unfortunate people the whole way to Vienna.





CHAPTER XI.

The Comtesse de Thoun and her Soirées—The Comtesse Kinska—Casanova—Prince Kaunitz—Baron de Strogonoff—Comte de Langeron—Comtesse de Fries—Her Spectacles—Comtesse de Schönfeld.



E arrived at last at the good city of Vienna, where two years and a half of my life passed in such an agreeable manner, that I have always felt obliged to the Comte Wilsheck for having induced me to make the journey. As Monsieur, Madame de Bistri, and myself did not wish to separate, we established ourselves in one of the faubourgs of the city, and there I took the portrait of the charming Comtesse de Bistri, who was a very handsome woman.

Shortly after my arrival, I went to deliver in person the letters of introduction given me by Comte Wilsheck. Amongst the number was one for the celebrated Prince de Kaunitz who had been Minister under Maria Theresa.*

* Wenceslas-Antoine, Count de Rietberg and Prince de Kaunitz, exercised for such a long period the direction of governments and courts, that he went by the name of *Le Cocher de l'Europe*. The patriotism of Prince Kaunitz was such, that one day having proposed to Marie Thérèse, a field-marshal to be President of the Aulic Council of War, the Empress said to him: "But this man is your declared enemy;" the Prince replied: "Madame, this man is the friend of the State, and that is the only thing I ought to consider."

I also called on the Comtesse de Thoun. She invited me at once to her soirées, where all the best society in Vienna congregated. I met many émigrés from our poor France : the Duc de Richelieu, the Comte de Langeron, the Comtesse de Sabran and her son, the Polignac family, and later on, the kind and good Comte de Vaudreuil, whom I was delighted to meet again.

I have never seen assembled in any drawing-room a greater number of pretty women than I met at Madame de Thoun's. The greater number of these ladies brought their work, and sat round a large table. Sometimes I was consulted as to the shading of their silks ; but as what I detest more than anything else is to look at bright colours by lamp or candle light, I very often gave my advice without looking. As a rule, I have always taken care of my eyes, and I have found the benefit of it, for even now I paint without being obliged to wear spectacles.

Amongst these pretty women, there were three quite remarkable for their beauty : the Princesse Linoska, wife of the Russian Ambassador, Count Rasomoffski, and the charming Comtesse Kinska, née Comtesse Diedrochstein. This last was endowed with every charm ; her face, her figure were perfection ; I was much surprised when I heard her history, which was quite a romance. The parents on both sides had agreed to marry their children without their knowing anything about the arrangement. The Count lived somewhere in Germany, and only arrived in time for the celebration of the marriage. Immediately after mass, he said to his young and charming wife ; " Madame we

have obeyed our parents ; I leave you with regret ; but I cannot conceal from you that for a long time I have been attached to a woman without whom I cannot live, and I am going to rejoin her." The post carriage was at the church door ; this adieu made, the Count entered it and drove off to join his Dulcinea.

The Comtesse Kinska was therefore neither girl, wife nor widow, and this circumstance must have astonished every one who beheld her ; for I never saw any woman as lovely. Joined to her great beauty was a most amiable disposition, and much kindness of heart ; one day when she gave me a sitting, my daughter's governess entered the room with such a bright and happy look, that I asked her what she had heard to make her so. "I have just heard from my husband," she replied, "that I have been placed on the list of émigrés. I lose eight hundred francs a year by it : but I am quite content, as at last I am put on the list of honest people." The Countess and myself were greatly touched by such honourable disinterestedness. A few minutes afterwards, Madame Kinska told me that the dress I wore for painting in seemed so comfortable, that she would like to have one made like it, for she knew my child's governess made these blouses for me. I offered to lend her one. "No," she replied, "I should like you to have it made for me by Madame Charot, your governess ; I will send her the material." A few days afterwards, I sent her the dress made as she requested. As soon as our sitting was over, the Countess ran to Madame Charot's room and gave her ten louis (two hundred francs) ; it was declined : but the amiable Countess put it on the mantel-

piece, and fled like a bird, very happy to have contributed a quarter of the lost pension to this good woman.

It was always my custom, on arriving in a town, to make my first visits to the artists, and I did not delay in calling on Casanova, a celebrated painter of battle pieces. He was then about sixty years old, but was quite strong and robust, though he wore two or three pairs of spectacles, one over the other. He was then working at several grand pictures, representing the noble deeds of Prince de Nassau. Casanova was full of spirit and originality. He was a great gossip, and he used to amuse us extremely at the dinners given by Prince Kaunitz, by stories which were sometimes pure fictions but very droll and comical. One day, dining at the same house, the conversation turned on painting, and Rubens in particular, when some one, alluding to his immense talent, said, that his general knowledge, which was also prodigious, had caused him to be named an ambassador. At these words, an old German Baroness interrupted the speaker, and said : "What ! a painter, ambassador ! no doubt it was an ambassador who amused himself by painting." "No, Madame," replied Casanova, "it was a painter who amused himself by being an ambassador."

Casanova had made a large fortune ; but his extravagance was such that he dissipated it all.

On leaving him, I called on Prince Kaunitz whom I greatly desired to know. This great minister was then about eighty-three years of age at the least ; he was very tall, very thin, and held himself very erect. He received me with the greatest kindness, and asked me to dine with

him the following day. As we sat down to table at seven o'clock, and I was in the habit of dining by myself at half-past two, this invitation and those which followed, whilst very flattering, did not altogether please me. I did not like dining so late, or dining with so many people, for his table, composed principally of strangers, was always laid for thirty and sometimes more. From that day I always dined at home first, and was obliged to conceal this as much as possible, in taking half an hour to eat a boiled egg ; but this little trick which the Prince speedily perceived, annoyed him, and caused us to have many little quarrels ; notwithstanding, he had a sincere friendship for me, for which I feel deeply grateful. He always called me his *good friend*, and he insisted that my "Sybil" should remain on view for a fortnight in his salon, during which he did the honours of this picture to the city and the court, with an amiability that was quite affectionate for me.

Notwithstanding his great age, Prince Kaunitz was in full possession of all his faculties. His taste, his exquisite judgment, and good sense astonished everyone. His only weakness was to imagine that he rode on horseback better than anyone. He certainly acquitted himself wonderfully. He rode like a Frenchman ; his costume and figure reminded me of the cavaliers of the time of Louis XIV., such as we see them represented in the beautiful pictures of Wouvermans.

Prince Kaunitz was held in the highest esteem at Vienna ; the glory he had acquired when minister, still remained with him. The first day of the year, and that of his fête, an immense crowd came to his house to compli-

ment him ; one might have thought him an emperor on these two days, therefore I was much surprised at the indifference exhibited by the Viennese at the time of his death. I was still at Vienna, when this event occurred.

Prince Kaunitz died after a very short illness, and people hardly seemed to notice the disappearance of this great man. As for myself, I was very much grieved. I remember going to see an exhibition of figures in wax shortly after his death ; I was quite shocked at the sight of that of the Prince lying down, dressed in the clothes he usually wore, in fact absolutely such as I had often seen him in. This unexpected sight made a sad impression on me, for I know nothing more painful than to see an exact representation of one whom one has loved, deprived of activity and life.

Shortly after my arrival in Vienna, I made the acquaintance of the Baron and Baroness Strogonoff, who both asked me to take their portraits. The Baroness was much liked for her sweetness and extreme benevolence ; as for her husband, he possessed the happiest art of animating society ; his replies were the delight of Vienna, as also his fêtes and private theatricals, to which everyone strove to be invited. I have known very few men as amiable and gay as Baron Strogonoff. When the desire for a good laugh and to amuse himself took him, he would invent all the follies imaginable. One day, amongst others, knowing that many of his acquaintances and mine were going to see the exhibition of figures in wax, he excused himself under some pretext of being unable to accompany us, and going there before we did, he craftily placed himself be-

hind a pedestal, in such a manner as only to show his head. Going through the portrait gallery, we passed before him, but he had fixed his eyes and features so immoveably that none of us recognised him. After having visited the other rooms, we passed him a second time without recognition ; but, at last impatient at our want of notice, he moved and spoke. We were all frightened and much surprised at not having found him out.

I have rarely seen acting better done than by amateurs at the Baroness de Strogonoff's. The first rôles were filled by Comte de Langeron, who played the lovers with the greatest grace and ease, and who had a real passion for acting ; M. de Rivière played the comic parts in an astonishing manner. This amiable man was very talented ; Doyen, the painter, said of M. de Rivière that he was an ornament to society. He painted very well ; he sang and played on the violin and piano ; he had perfect tact and an excellent heart. M. de Rivière was small, thin, and even at the age of sixty, his figure and appearance was that of a man of thirty.

As for M. de Langeron, he was both charming and witty. This brave and amiable Frenchman, died (owing to our revolution) with the Russians, as Governor of Odessa.*

* It is painful to be compelled to add that M. de Langeron became the enemy of his country. In 1814, General Langeron, who served under Count Blucher, fought with him against the French at Soissons, Laon, Vitry, and marched on to Paris. In 1815 he fought against the French again, and contributed to the disaster at Waterloo. Count de Langeron, who was born in Paris, 1763, died at Odessa, 1831.

The Chevalier de Boufflers, the Vicomte de Ségur, and Comte Louis de Narbonne, were models of grace and wit. I never heard a more courtier-like reply than that made by the last named to the Emperor Bonaparte, who, speaking of Madame de Narbonne, said to him : “ Your mother does not like me.” “ I know, it Sire,” replied the Count, “ she has not yet gone further than admiration.”

The Baron de Strogonoff’s was not the only house where theatricals were performed in Vienna. The Comtesse de Fries, widow of the famous banker of that name, had a very pretty theatre, and I frequently witnessed very good acting there ; her daughter, Mademoiselle de Fries, had a beautiful voice, and sang delightfully. Her sister, the Comtesse de Schönfeld, was very pretty, and gave herself great airs, to such a degree, that one day when her mother had given a part to act in a certain piece to her nephew, who had a very common-place appearance ; and as I was seated near Madame de Schönfeld, I asked her who the gentleman was, she replied confusedly : “ He is my mother’s nephew,” not wishing to say, he is my cousin.





CHAPTER XII.

Portraits I took in Vienna—Royal Museum—Schönbrunn—The Prater—Balls—Prince Esterhazy—Princesse Maréchale Lubomirska—Comtesse de Rombec—Death of Louis XVI. and Marie-Antoinette—Death of Madame de Polignac.



MONSIEUR and Madame Bistri being obliged to return to Poland, I engaged apartments in Vienna itself; in which city it is said there are three causes of death: the wind, the dust, and the waltz.

As soon as I was settled, I made many portraits, amongst others, the daughter of the Spanish Ambassador, Mademoiselle de Kagnenek, who was sixteen and very pretty, also those of the Baron and Baroness de Strogoff. My Sybil, which crowds came to my house to see, contributed not a little in deciding many people to ask me to paint them. It would be difficult for me to express all the gratitude I felt for the kindness I received in this city. Not only the Viennese showed affection for myself personally, but they also proved it by hanging my pictures in the best positions. I remember, for example, that Prince Paar, to whom I had sent the large portrait I had made of his sister the kind and good Comtesse Dubugui, in-

vited me to go and see the picture at his house. I found the painting placed in the *salon*, and effectively draped in green, which threw out the colours, and showed it off to great advantage.

One circumstance greatly astonished me, and that was seeing ladies take their work and knitting to the theatre ; amongst others the beautiful Comtesse Kinska would knit coarse socks in her *loge* ; I thought this very strange, but when I heard these socks were for the poor, I changed my opinion, and it gave me pleasure to see so many young people working so industriously.

Vienna, whose extent is very considerable, as it comprises no less than thirty-two faubourgs, is full of fine palaces. The Imperial Museum contains pictures of the best masters. The Prater is undoubtedly one of the finest promenades in the world. The park of Schönbrunn is also much frequented, especially on Sundays. One frequently meets young couples walking together there, and their position is understood and respected, for no one notices them ; the promenades at Schönbrunn being nearly always the prelude to marriage.

I went to several balls, particularly to those given by the Russian Ambassador, Comte Rasowmoffski, which may truly be called charming fêtes. They danced the waltz there with so much energy, that I could not imagine all these persons did not fall from sheer giddiness ; but both men and women are so accustomed to this violent exercise, that they never rest as long as the ball continues. They also frequently danced the Polonaise, which is much less fatiguing, for this dance is a simple promenade. It

suits pretty women wonderfully, as it gives time for people to admire their face and figure.

I also went to a court ball. The Emperor Francis II. had married as his second wife Maria-Theresa of the Two Sicilies, daughter of the Queen of Naples. I had painted this princess in 1792 ; but I found her so changed, that on seeing her at this ball, I could scarcely recognise her. Her nose was longer, her cheeks fallen in, so that she reminded me of her father. I regretted that she did not retain any likeness of her mother, who reminded me of our charming Queen of France.

New Year's day is very brilliant at Vienna, one meets then so many Hungarians in their elegant costume, which suits their tall and well made figures. One of the most remarkable was the Prince Esterhazy ; I saw him pass, mounted on a richly caparisoned horse, covered with a horse-cloth sewn with diamonds. His dress was of great magnificence and sparkled in the sun.

The Polish society in Vienna was very agreeable, the ladies nearly all being amiable and pretty ; and I painted some of the most beautiful. They generally frequented the salon of the Princesse Lubomirska, whom I had known in Paris, and often visited at Vienna. She entertained most brilliantly, giving very fine concerts, and charming balls. I also met a great réunion of Poles at the house of the Princesse Czartoriska. Her husband was most kind, and their son has since been made Minister at St. Petersburg.

I was much pleased at meeting again Madame the Comtesse de Brionne, Princess of Lorraine. She had always been kind to me from the time I was a child, and I often

supped with her, where I frequently met the valiant Prince de Nassau, so terrible in battle, so gentle and modest in a drawing-room.

I was a constant visitor at the house of the Comtesse de Rombec, sister of Comte Cobentzel. Madame de Rombec was the best of women ! she was witty, with a most happy disposition ; she was very charitable, it being at her house that collections were made and lotteries got up for the benefit of the poor. I have often remarked that collections made in a drawing-room are the most efficacious means of assisting them. I remember when at Rome I often passed an evening with good kind Lady Clifford, whom I saw one evening go round purse in hand and make the tour of the company, which was numerous. When she came to me, seeing I had prepared my offering : “ No,” she said, “ I collect for one of my countrymen whom I do not know, but who has lost at play all he possessed ; it is we who must help him.” I thought this a truly English proceeding.

The Comtesse de Rombec collected in her drawing-room the most distinguished society of Vienna. It was at her house I met Prince Metternich and his son, who since then has been made Prime Minister. I also met again the amiable Prince de Ligne ; he related the charming journey he had made in the Crimea with the Empress Catherine II., which gave me a great desire to see this grand sovereign. I renewed my acquaintance with the charming Duchesse de Guiche ; her mother, Madame la Duchesse de Polignac, inhabited a country-house near Vienna. It was there she heard of the death of Louis

XVI., which affected her to such an extent that her health gave way ; but when she heard of the frightful news of the Queen's death, her sorrow changed her so much that her charming face became quite altered, and one could see death written there. She died shortly afterwards, leaving her family and many friends inconsolable for her loss.

For my own part, I learnt nothing from the newspapers, for I had ceased to read them since the day I opened one at Madame de Rombec's, where I found the names of nine persons of my acquaintance who had been guillotined. It was from my brother that I heard of the horrible event, without adding any particulars. He merely said that Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette died on the scaffold ! I have not ventured to ask the least question about all that accompanied or preceded this frightful assassination, so that to this day I know nothing except one incident which I will mention later on.





CHAPTER XIII.

Huitzing—Princesse Lichtenstein—I decide on going to Russia—
Prince de Ligne lends me the Convent of Caltemberg as a residence.



WHEN spring had set in, I hired a small house in a village near Vienna, and settled myself there for a short time. The village of Huitzing was close to the park of Schönbrunn. The Polignac family lived there in a large square house like the one at Nîmes.

I took with me to Huitzing the large portrait I was then painting of the Princesse de Lichtenstein, in order to finish it. This young princess had a beautiful figure, her pretty face had a sweet and celestial expression which gave me the idea of representing her as Iris. She was painted full length, flying through the air. Her scarf was of the colours of the rainbow, and floated carelessly around her. As may be imagined, I painted her feet naked ; but when the picture was placed in the gallery of the Prince, her husband, the heads of the family were greatly scandalised to perceive that the Princess was exhibited without shoes, and the Prince told me he had placed under the portrait a pretty little pair of shoes,

which he told his grandparents had just slipped off and fallen to the ground.

The borders of the Danube are superb, and offered me the means of satisfying my taste for solitary and picturesque promenades. One evening, walking by the river's side, I saw a man in a small boat aim with his gun at a crow, which having killed he placed in his boat ; but at the same moment an enormous number of crows flew down upon him. The man was terrified and ran his boat on shore, taking refuge in a hut on the banks, which I thought was a very prudent measure, for I had not the least doubt but that the crows, in revenge for the death of their comrade, would have killed him. The man having fled, the poor birds approached the dead crow, and carried it away into the branches of some tree close by. Then commenced a series of cries and croaks of the most dismal character. I remained at the spot two or three hours, but their fury had not abated. This scene, which greatly surprised me, threw me into a reverie on the human race, in which I must own all the advantage was on the side of the crows.

I was as happy at Vienna as it was possible to be far from one's people and country. In winter, the city offered me one of the most polished and brilliant societies in Europe, and when fine weather returned, I went with delight to the charms of my little country retreat. I had, therefore, no idea of leaving Austria before it was prudent and safe to return to France, when the Russian Ambassador and many of my countrymen pressed me to go to St. Petersburg, where I was assured the Empress

would view my arrival with pleasure. All the Prince de Ligne had told me of Catherine II. inspired me with a great desire to see this Sovereign. I also thought that a short stay in Russia would complete the fortune I had promised to make before returning to Paris ; I decided, therefore, on making the journey.

I was engaged in making preparations for leaving Vienna, when the Prince de Ligne came to see me. He advised me to wait the melting of the snow, and, to make sure of my remaining, offered me a residence on Mount Caltemberg, an old convent which had been given to him by the Emperor Joseph II. Knowing my predilection for high places, he tempted me by saying that the Caltemberg was the loftiest mountain in the environs of Vienna, and I could not resist the desire to stay there for a short period.

I went there, accompanied by my daughter, her governess, and M. de Rivière ; the road was horrible and rocky which led to the convent. The guardian and his wife, to whom the Prince had recommended us, were most *empressés* in their attentions. They at once prepared our rooms, which were only small cells. Whilst these arrangements were being made, I went to rest on a bench outside, where I had a magnificent view. Beneath me wound the Danube, intersected by small islands, covered with the most beautiful vegetation. I remained three weeks in this beautiful place. M. de Rivière, more of a worldling than myself, frequently went down to Vienna ; but for all this we frequently made lovely promenades together.



CHAPTER XIV.

I leave Vienna—Prague—The Churches—Buda—Dresden—Promenades—The Gallery—Raffaelle—Fortress of Königsberg—Berlin—Reinsberg—Prince Henry of Prussia.



FTER having remained in Vienna for two years and a half, I left it on Sunday the 19th of April, 1795, on my way to Prague, where I arrived the 23rd of April, by a lovely road.

What first attracted my attention on entering the capital of Bohemia, was the bridge across the Elbe. The bridge is very fine and has twenty-four arches.

I commenced by visiting the churches. In that of St. Thomas, I greatly admired a fine picture of Rubens, of the Martyrdom of St. Thomas; then one of Caravaggio, which though very dark, has fine details.

The cathedral is a noble structure, and encloses the tombs of three emperors, also a chapel of silver, in which lie the remains of Saint Népomïcène; besides this, the iron coat of mail belonging to the Saint is held as a precious relic in this church, and crowds go there to kiss it.

I only remained one day at Prague; desiring to reach Dresden as quickly as possible. On our way we passed through Buda, which, though beautifully situated, is almost a deserted town.

Dresden is a pretty town, well built, but at this epoch was very badly paved. The environs of Dresden are charming, principally the Plaone, where there is a splendid view ; but unfortunately all these fine places are infected by the odour of tobacco. It is there, that principally on Sundays, the *bourgeois* make their parties of pleasure, taking their dinner, and as soon as their repast is finished they begin to smoke, which spoils, to my mind, these delicious promenades.

The day after my arrival I went to visit the magnificent gallery of pictures, which having been so often described, I will only mention that I was lost in admiration of the masterpieces of painting it contains. The Elector did me the honour to ask me to exhibit my "Sybil" in this gallery, and for a week it was visited by the whole Court. I went on the first day, in order to show the Elector how touched and gratified I felt for this high favour, which I was far from expecting or meriting.

We visited the famous fortress of Königsberg, and my daughter formed one of the party. There is such a deep well there, that on throwing down a stone it takes thirty seconds to reach the bottom. The view from this fortress is of immense extent.

From Dresden I went straight on to Berlin, where I remained only five days, for my intention was to remain there a short time on my way back from Russia, in order to see the charming Queen of Prussia.

I left Berlin on the 28th of May, 1795, for Reinsberg, situated about sixty miles from the capital, and the residence of Prince Henri. I found there, to my great de-

light, the Marquise de Sabran, and the Chevalier de Boufflers. It was owing to a letter from this amiable woman, addressed to me at Berlin, in which she told me that Prince Henri would never forgive my leaving for Russia without first paying him a visit, which decided me on taking this short journey. I had every reason to believe that Madame de Sabran had spoken the truth, when I saw the Prince hasten to the carriage to welcome me. Though I was still in my travelling dress, he insisted on at once presenting me to his family, without giving me time to make a little change in my toilette. I fancied that the ladies seemed rather astonished; but the kind Prince made all the excuses, and took upon himself all the blame.

The château is finely situated and divided into two parts, of which the Ferdinand family inhabited the largest. The following day Prince Henri took me for a walk in the park, which is very large and fine. For love of the brave warriors who fought with him in the Seven Years' War, the Prince had erected an enormous pyramid on which all their names were inscribed. But what touched me most, was the sight of a column, at the base of which are verses in honour of the devotion and generous death of Malesherbes ! *

* Chrétien-Guillaume de Malesherbes born at Paris, 1724, and died, guillotined in the same city, 1794. Malesherbes was a great magistrate, a just minister, an heroic advocate, a faithful friend, a voluntary and sublime victim. Not having as defender of the king been able to save his august client, Malesherbes would not defend himself before the revolutionary tribunal, and was condemned to death for

The Comtesse de Sabran, her son, and the Chevalier de Boufflers were established at Reinsberg : they remained there long after my departure. The Prince had given them some land, and the Chevalier had commenced cultivating it. In this lonely place I led the most agreeable and delightful life possible.

I cannot express how sorry I was to leave this excellent Prince, whom alas ! I never saw again, and whom I shall regret all my life.

In leaving Reinsberg we took the road by Königsberg. The little towns we traversed were very well built, and most of the country fertile. At last I arrived at Riga, and there I remained several days to rest, and to await our passports for St. Petersburg.

having conspired against the unity of the French Republic. Malesherbes was conducted to the scaffold at the same time as his daughter and her husband. His foot having hit against a stone in crossing the Palais de Justice, he said to his companion : " This is what may be called a bad omen ; a Roman in my place would have returned to his own home."





CHAPTER XV.

Peterhof—Saint Petersburg—Comte Esterhazy—Czarskoiesiolo—
Grand-Duchess Elisabeth, wife of Alexander—Catherine II.—
Comte Strogonoff—Kaminostroff—Hospitable character of the
Russians.



REACHED St. Petersburg the 25th July, 1795, by the Peterhof road, which gave me a favourable impression of the city ; for the road is bordered on each side by charming country-houses, surrounded by gardens in the English style. The inhabitants have done the best with their ground, which is very marshy, by ornamenting it with kiosques and little bridges over the canals, which traverse them. It is unfortunate that every evening the most frightful humidity sets in, which entirely destroys the pleasing aspect of the place ; even before sunset there arises such a fog on this road, that one imagines oneself enveloped in a thick black smoke.

I was enchanted with the magnificence of this city, its monuments, its fine hotels and large streets of which one, the Nevski Prospect, is three miles in length. The beautiful Neva, so clear and limpid, traverses the city, laden with vessels which go and come unceasingly. The quays of the Neva are of granite, as are also many canals that Catherine has had dug in the interior of the city. On one

side of the river are superb monuments, that of the Academy of Arts, the Academy of Science, and many others, which are reflected in the Neva. In fact, St. Petersburg transported me to the time of Agamemnon, as much for the grandeur of its monuments, as for the costume of its people, which recalls that of ancient times.

In the month of July, when I arrived, there was scarcely one hour of night ; the sun sets at about half-past ten in the evening ; the reflection lasts till twilight sets in about half an hour after midnight, to such a degree that I have often had supper at eleven o'clock by daylight.

The fatigue I had undergone in my journey from Riga had been so great, I was obliged to rest at once on my arrival. I was far from feeling rested when, after having been in St. Petersburg only twenty-four hours, Prince Esterhazy was announced. He came to congratulate me on my arrival in St. Petersburg, told me that he should at once inform the Empress of it, and at the same time arrange for my presentation at Court. Immediately afterwards, I received a visit from the Comte de Choiseul Gouffier. In conversation with him, I expressed the pleasure it would give me to see this great Catherine ; but I did not hide from him the fear and nervousness I should feel when presented to such a *puissante* princess. "Re-assure yourself," he replied, "when you see the Empress, you will be astonished at her simplicity and good-nature ; for," he added, "she is really a good woman."

I confess that this expression surprised me ; I could scarcely credit its truth, after what I had heard others say of her. It is true the Prince de Ligne had charmed us

with the narration of his journey in the Crimea, he had related so many anecdotes of this Princess, which proved her to have as much grace as simplicity in her manners ; but a *good woman*, one must own was not the correct term to apply to her.

However that might be, that very evening M. d'Esterhazy, on returning from Czarskoiesiolo, where the Empress was residing, came to announce that Her Majesty would receive me the following day at one o'clock. Such a prompt presentation, which I had not at all expected, threw me into extreme embarrassment ; I had only some very plain muslin dresses, never wearing anything else in general, and it was impossible to have a handsome dress made by the following day even at St. Petersburg. Prince Esterhazy had told me that he should come to take me at ten o'clock precisely to breakfast with his wife, who lived at Czarskoiesiolo, so that when he arrived at the appointed time, I felt in a very unhappy state of mind as regarded my toilette, which was certainly not a court toilette.

On arriving at Madame d'Esterhazy's, I noticed at once her astonishment. Her good-natured politeness could not prevent her saying : " Madame, have you not brought another dress ? " I became crimson at this question, and explained how I had not had the time to procure a more suitable dress. Her dissatisfied air redoubled my anxiety to such an extent, that I had to screw up all my courage against the moment of my presentation to the Empress.

M. d'Esterhazy gave me his arm, and we crossed a portion of the park, when, at a window on the ground floor,

I perceived a young person watering a pot of carnations. She looked about seventeen at the utmost ; her features were fine and regular, and a perfect oval, her complexion was lovely, of a pallor quite in harmony with her face of angelic sweetness. She wore a white loose robe, fastened by a sash worn loosely round her waist, which was small and supple as a young nymph's. Such as I have described her, this young person stepped forward so gracefully, that I cried out : "She is Psyche !" It was the Princess Elizabeth, wife of Alexander. She at once addressed me, and kept me sufficiently long enough to say a thousand gracious things, then she added : "We have long been wanting to see you here, Madame, so much so that I even dreamt you had arrived." I left her with regret, and I have always remembered the lovely apparition.

Tremblingly I arrived at the palace, and a few moments afterwards was *tête-à-tête* with the autocrat of all the Russias. M. d'Esterhazy had informed me that I must kiss her hand, and in consequence of this custom she had taken off one of her gloves, which ought to have reminded me of it ; but I entirely forgot it. It is true that the appearance of this celebrated woman made such an impression on me, that it was impossible to think of anything else but looking at her. I was at first extremely surprised to find her very short ; I had fancied her prodigiously tall, as high as her grandeur. She was very stout, but had still a handsome face, beautifully set off by her white curly hair. Genius seemed seated on her high white forehead. Her eyes were soft and sweet, her nose quite Grecian, her complexion florid, and her features very animated.

She at once said in a voice of much sweetness : " I am charmed to see you here, Madame ; your reputation has preceded you. I greatly love the arts ; and above all painting. I am not a connoisseur, only an amateur."

Everything she said during this interview, which was rather long, was the hope that I should be so well pleased with Russia, that I should remain in the country some time, and her whole conversation showed so much true benevolence, that my timidity disappeared, and when I took leave of Her Majesty I was entirely reassured. Only I could not forgive myself for having forgotten to kiss her beautiful white hand, and I was still more vexed because M. d'Esterhazy reproached me for it. As for my dress, she did not appear to have paid the least attention to it, and perhaps she was less scrupulous than our ambassadress. I went over a portion of the gardens of Czar-skoiesiolo which are quite fairy like. The Empress had a sort of terrace which communicated with her apartments, on which she kept a quantity of birds ; they told me she went herself to feed them, and it was one of her greatest pleasures.

Shortly after my reception, Her Majesty expressed her intention of allowing me to pass the summer in this beautiful country place. She ordered her Controllers of the Household to give me apartments in the château, desiring to have me near her in order to see me paint. But I have since heard that these gentlemen did not wish to see me placed so near the Empress ; and notwithstanding reiterated orders they persisted in saying that there were no available rooms to be had. What much surprised me was

to hear that these courtiers, believing me to be of the party of the Comte d'Artois, feared that through my influence I might succeed in replacing M. d'Esterhazy by another ambassador. It is highly probable that M. d'Esterhazy was quite aware of their proceedings; but he knew me very little not to understand that I was far too occupied with my painting to give my time to political matters.

The welcome which I received in Russia was sufficiently good to console me for a petty court intrigue. My letters of introduction became quite useless to me; not only was I invited to pass my life in the best and most agreeable houses, but I met again at St. Petersburg, many old friends and acquaintances. First of all the Comte Strogonoff, a true lover of the arts, whose portrait I first took in Paris, when I was very young. We met again with the greatest pleasure. He possessed, at St. Petersburg, a splendid collection of pictures, and near the city, at Raminostroff, a charming Italian casino, where every Sunday he gave great dinner parties. I was enchanted with the place, the windows of the casino overlooked the Neva. The garden, which appeared of great extent, was laid out in the English manner. Quantities of boats arrived from all quarters bringing people either to dine at Comte Strogonoff's or simply to walk in his garden.

On the day I was there, about three o'clock, we all assembled in a covered terrace, open at each side; on one side lay the park, and on the other the Neva. It was the most perfect weather; for summer is most exquisite in Russia, though often in July I have found it hotter than

Italy. We dined on this terrace, the dinner was magnificent ; as soon as we were seated at table, a company of musicians played delightfully during the whole of dinner.

The house of Comte Strogonoff was far from being the only one of like magnificence. At St. Petersburg, as at Moscow, numbers of the nobility possessing colossal fortunes, prided themselves on keeping an open table, so that any well recommended stranger had never occasion to dine at a restaurant. I recollect that towards the end of my stay at St. Petersburg, Prince Narischkin, grand equerry, kept an open table of twenty-five to thirty places every day for visitors who had brought letters of introduction.

This hospitality exists also in the interior of Russia, where modern civilisation has not hitherto penetrated.





CHAPTER XVI.

Comte Cobentzel—Princesse Dolgorouki—Tableaux Vivants—Poutemkin—Madame de With—I am robbed—Doyen—M. de L—.



PROFITED by the remainder of the fine weather to visit a little of the country around St. Petersburg ; for summer finishes in Russia in the month of August, and there is no autumn. I often walked in the Park of Czarskoiesiolo, which is very fine and bordered by the sea ; it is full of monuments that the Empress calls her *caprices*. One sees a superb marble bridge in the style of the Palladio ; Turkish baths, trophies of the victories of Romazoff and Orloff ; a temple with thirty-two columns, then the colonnade, and grand staircase of Hercules.

Comte Cobentzel wished me much to make the acquaintance of a woman whose cleverness and beauty I had heard greatly praised, the Princesse Dolgorouki. I received an invitation to dine with her at her country-house, Alexandrowski, and the Comte came to escort me there with my daughter. This large house was very poorly furnished ; the river flowed at the bottom of the garden, and it delighted me to see the continual passage of boats in which the rowers always sang. Their songs are all melodious and sad.

The beauty of Princesse Dolgorouki struck me. Her features were of the Grecian mixed with the Jewish type, particularly the profile. Her long chestnut hair fell over her shoulders; her figure was admirable, and her whole bearing expressed grace and nobility without the least affectation. She received me with so much amiability and distinction, that I at once accepted her invitation to pass a week with her. The amiable Princesse Kourakin, with whom I then made acquaintance, was residing with the Princesse Dolgorouki, and these two ladies with Comte Cobentzel kept house together. The other guests were very numerous, and no one thought of anything but amusing themselves. After dinner we used to go in elegant boats on the river; musicians in another boat preceded us. The evening of my arrival we had a delightful concert, and the day after, theatricals. They performed the *Souterrain* by Dalayrac. The Princesse Dolgorouki took the part of Camille; young Ribaussière (who has since been made minister in Russia), the part of the child; and Comte Cobentzel, the gardener. I remember that during the performance a courier arrived from Vienna with despatches, for the Comte, who was Austrian Ambassador to St. Petersburg, and at the sight of a man, dressed as a gardener, he refused to give him the despatches, which raised a most amusing discussion.

The little theatre was charming, and I profited by it to arrange some *tableaux*. I chose my personages from the handsomest men and the most beautiful women who visited us, and I draped them in cashmere shawls of which we had an abundance. I chose serious or Bible subjects, in

preference to any other. These *tableaux-vivants* greatly amused the company.

At the end of a week, which appeared like a moment, I bade adieu to the amiable Princess ; for I had made so many engagements for portraits, I could not, to my regret stay any longer.

Comte de Cobentzel was passionately in love with the Princesse Dolgorouki, without her returning it the very least ; but the indifference with which she received his attentions, did not cause the least diminution in them, and as the old song says, he preferred her frowns to the favours of any other women. He was her slave in everything. Comte de Cobentzel appeared about fifty years of age, was very ugly and squinted horribly. He was tall, but very fat, which did not prevent his being very active, especially when he executed the orders of his well-beloved Princess.

What made the Princesse Dolgorouki so indifferent to the attentions of M. de Cobentzel and many other adorers, was that she was accustomed to the worship of men still higher in rank and intellect. The famous Potemkin,* who desired that the word *impossible* should be erased from the dictionary, had loved her passionately, and the magnificence with which he showed his love, was such as one reads of in the "Arabian Nights." In 1791, after his journey in the Crimea, the Empress Catherine II. returned to Saint Petersburg. Prince Potemkin remained commander-

* Grégoire Alexandrovitch, Prince Potemkin, the most known favourite of the Empress Catherine II., was born in 1736 near Smolensko, and died at Nicolaief in 1791.

in-chief of the army, where most of the Generals had brought their wives. It was then that he became acquainted with the Princesse Dolgorouki. She was called Catherine, and her fête day having arrived, the Prince gave a grand dinner, said to be in honour of the Empress. He had placed the Princesse by his side. At dessert, crystal cups filled with diamonds were served to the ladies in spoonfuls. The queen of the feast appeared to remark this magnificence; Potemkin whispered to her in a low voice: "Since it is you that I fête, how can you be astonished at anything!" He spared nothing in order to satisfy a desire or a caprice of this adored woman. Having heard that she had no shoes for a ball, owing to her always getting them from France, Potemkin immediately despatched a courier to Paris, who by travelling day and night, brought her the shoes. One circumstance well known by everyone at St. Petersburg, is, that to afford the Princesse a spectacle which she had expressed a wish to see, he gave orders for the assault on the fortress of Otshakoff sooner than was agreed upon, and perhaps sooner than was prudent.

When I arrived at Saint Petersburg Prince Potemkin had been dead some years, but they spoke of him still as a sort of enchanter. One may form an idea of the extraordinary power and grandeur of his imagination, in reading the accounts written by the Prince de Ligne and Comte de Ségur, on the journey made by the Empress Catherine II., in the Crimea. The palaces, the wooden villages built on the road, as by a fairy's wand; the immense forest he burnt to give Her Majesty a real firework exhibition—

all this journey, in fact, is truly fantastic and characteristic of the man. His niece, the Comtesse Scawronski, told me at Vienna: "If my uncle had known you, he would have overwhelmed you with riches and honour." It is certain that this celebrated man, showed himself generous to a fault, and foolishly magnificent; and though possessing a fortune which exceeded many sovereigns, the Prince de Ligne told me he was frequently short of money.

The favour and power bestowed on him by the Empress had accustomed Prince Potemkin to satisfy his slightest wish. A story is told of him which proves this undoubtedly. Some one speaking before him one day of the height of one of his aides-de-camp, said that an officer whom he named, in the Russian Army, was even taller. Those present who knew the officer, contested the point. Potemkin immediately sent off an express with the order to bring back the gentleman in question, who was then about 2,400 miles off. When the officer heard that he was sent for by the Prince, his joy was extreme; for he felt assured he was going to be appointed to a superior grade. One can therefore imagine his disappointment, when on his arrival at the camp, he learnt that it was only that he might be measured against the aide-de-camp of Potemkin, and that he was expected to return at once without any other result than the fatigue of a very long journey.

The man who had so very long remained first favourite, and who had, as it were, reigned by the side of his sovereign, could not surrive the thought of a disgrace. When

he learnt that the new favourite, young Platon Zouboff,* appeared to have gained entire ascendancy over the mind of the Empress, Potemkin at once decided on leaving the army, and flew to St. Petersburg. In the meanwhile, Catherine II. had sent Prince Repnin to replace him in the command of the army, with orders to treat for peace, to which Potemkin had always been opposed. Irritated to the last degree on hearing this, he hastened on in the hope of stopping the final signature ; but at Yassy, he learnt that peace was concluded. This news was fatal ; having been for some time ailing, he became dangerously ill, which did not prevent his continuing his journey to St. Petersburg. His malady made such progress, that he was unable after a few hours to endure the motion of the carriage ; they laid him down in a field and covered him with cloaks, and there, Potemkin breathed his last, the 15th of October, 1791, in the arms of the Comtesse Branicka, his niece. I have never forgotten a speech the old Princesse Galitzin made

* Platon Zouboff, Lieutenant in the Horse Guards of the Empress of Russia, became in 1791 the last favourite of Catherine II. Soon afterwards he was made Grand Master of Artillery, Chevalier of the Order of St. Andrew and created Prince. Disgraced under Paul I., all his papers were seized, and he was deprived of all his posts. Recalled again to Court by the influence of Comte Pahlen, Governor-General of St. Petersburg, Platon Zouboff became, with his protector, chief of the conspiracy against the life of Paul I. He was the cruellest and most bitter of the Emperor's assassins. It was he who strangled the unfortunate prince with his scarf. Nicholas and Valerian Zouboff, his brothers, had also a large share in the conspiracy and assassination.

to me one day when speaking of the death of this celebrated man : " Alas, my dear, this great Prince, who had so many diamonds and so much wealth, died on the grass."

Princesse Dolgorouki was not the only beauty with whom the Prince fell in love. One, a charming Pole whom he adored, went by the name of Madame de With; she afterwards married M. de Potocki. For her, too, he displayed a gallantry of the most *recherché* kind. Amongst other traits of his magnificence, he devised a *fête*, and invited two hundred ladies ; after the dinner, there was a lottery from which each lady gained a splendid cashmere, and by this means he was enabled to give the finest and costliest shawl into the hands of the lovely Madame de With. Some years after this epoch, I met Madame de With in Paris, she was then as young and pretty looking as it is possible to be, but rather vain of her charming face.

As regards my monetary affairs, the first days of my stay in Russia were by no means happy ones for me. One may form an idea by the copy of a letter I wrote to my sister-in-law, Madame Vigée, six weeks after my arrival.

" St. Petersburg, September 10, 1795.

" I must now, dear Suzette, put you *au courant* of all my cares and tribulations. I am installed in an apartment which suits me very well, as it has a very good studio ; but it is very damp, the house only having been built three years, and not having been previously inhabited, which makes me foresee a move before the end of summer. This inconvenience is unfortunately not the only one.

Amongst others, an event has occurred which has given me a great deal of trouble.

“Shortly after my arrival, I was invited to spend the evening at the house of the Princesse Mentschikoff, where there were charming private theatricals. On returning home about one in the morning, I found Madame Charot, my daughter’s governess, standing on the staircase looking terrified and very pale : ‘ Ah ! Madame,’ she cried, ‘ you have been robbed of all your money ! ’ You may imagine just what a shock this gave me. Then she told me that my German servant had been the culprit ; that they had found on his person and in his bed packets of my gold ; that he had even thrown some down the staircase, in order that the Russian servant might also be accused. At last he had been taken away by the police, who after counting the money had taken it away as proof of the delinquency. I at once told Madame Charot that she had been very wrong to let them take away my pieces of gold, and I was very right ; for, now that the affair is finished, they have given me back the number of my pieces, but not their value. I had dappios and quadruples of Vienna, for which they gave me bad ducats, so that I lost 15,000 francs. But what made me more miserable still was that, according to the law of the country, this unfortunate boy was condemned to be hanged. He is son of the *concierge* of the Convent of Caltemberg, which the Prince de Ligne lent me as a residence when at Vienna. The man and his wife are the most honest people in the world, they took the greatest care of me, and I could not bear the idea of seeing their son hanged. I went to the governor and implored him to

save the miserable young man, and to let him go away quietly. Comte Samoieloff would not listen to my request, saying that the Empress had been informed of the robbery, and was incensed at it. I cannot tell you what it cost me in time and trouble to obtain the assurance at last that he should be sent away to sea, which was done.

“To return to my 15,000 francs, I regret it all the more because I have since lost 45,000 elsewhere. This is how : during the first month of my stay here, I had earned 15,000 roubles, a rouble is worth three francs ; I was advised to place this money with a banker who was held in great esteem. This estimable person became a bankrupt, and I never saw any more of my 45,000 francs. Hitherto it has been impossible for me to put by anything of what I have saved ; I await with resignation a more fortunate time.

“To change the subject, I must again tell you that I have again met my old friend, Doyen, the painter, who is so good and kind ; the Empress likes him much. She came to his assistance ; for he emigrated without any fortune, having only left in France a country-house, which was taken from him. He has his place at the theatre, close to the Empress’ box, who, I hear, often talks with him.

“I have also had the pleasure of again meeting the Baronne de Strogonoff, of whom I saw so much at Vienna, where I made the portraits of herself and husband. I had a little adventure at her house, which I must tell you, as it will make you laugh. One day at Vienna, whilst Madame de Strogonoff was having a sitting, she spoke to me about

a Greek supper, which you will recollect I mentioned to you at the time ; she added she knew that this supper had cost me 60,000 francs. I gave quite a jump off my seat on hearing this, and I speedily told her all about it, and I proved to her that I had only spent about fifteen francs. ‘ You astonish me,’ she replied ; ‘ for at St. Petersburg we heard of it from one of your own countrymen, Monsieur de L——, who said he was very intimate with you, and that he had been one of your guests.’ I replied what was true, that I only knew M. de L—— by name, and the subject dropped.

“ A few days after my arrival in St. Petersburg, which certainly M. de L—— never supposed me to be even likely to visit, the Baronne de Strogonoff was ailing, and I went to see her ; as I was seated at the side of her bed, M. de L—— was announced. Quick, I hid myself behind the curtains, and the gentleman entered ; the Baronne said to him—

“ ‘ Well ! you will be glad to hear that Madame Le Brun has arrived ? ’

“ Then for fun she began to draw him out on the subject of his acquaintance with me, and the Greek supper. The man commenced to stammer, and the Baronne still asked more questions, till at last I came forward and went up to him. ‘ Monsieur,’ I said, ‘ you are very intimate then with Madame Le Brun ? ’ He was obliged to say, ‘ Yes.’ ‘ This is very strange,’ I replied, ‘ for Monsieur, I am Madame Le Brun, her whom you have calumniated, and I meet you to-day for the first time in my life.’ At these words his limbs quite shook under him. He took his hat

and went away, and has not since been seen ; for at the best houses he has been shown the door.

“ One sad thing I have to remark very frequently, that in a strange country the French alone are capable of traducing their country people, even to the point of calumny. Everywhere, on the contrary, one sees the English, the Germans, and the Italians, upholding and mutually supporting each other.

“ Adieu, my good Suzette, I embrace and love thee with all my heart. My love to my brother also, and to thy dear little girl, who is so pretty and interesting.”





CHAPTER XVII.

I paint the two young Grand-Duchesses, daughters of Paul—Platon Zouboff — The Grand-Duchess Elizabeth — The Grand-Duchess Anne, wife of Constantine—Madame Narischkin—A Court Ball—A Gala—Dinners at St. Petersburg.



S I had predicted, it was not long before I moved into other apartments, which were situated on the grand square of the Imperial Palace. When the Empress returned to the city, I used to watch her every morning throw pieces of bread to hundreds of crows, that each day at a certain hour came to seek their pittance. In the evenings I could see her at about ten o'clock, when her rooms were lighted up, playing at hide and seek and other games with her grandchildren and other people of the Court.

As soon as Her Majesty had returned to St. Petersburg from Czarskoiesiolo, the Comte Strogonoff brought me an order from her to paint the two Grand-Duchesses Alexandrine and Hélène. These princesses were about thirteen and fourteen years of age, and their countenances were really lovely, though with totally different expressions. Their complexion was so fine and delicate, you would have thought that they lived on ambrosia. The eldest, Alexandrine, was of the Grecian type ; but Hélène's face ex-

pressed much more refinement. I grouped them together, holding and looking at a portrait of the Empress; the costume was slightly Greek, but very simple and modest. I was therefore greatly surprised when Zouboff, the favourite, told me that Her Majesty was scandalised at the manner I had dressed the two Grand-Duchesses in my picture. I so entirely believed this unkind remark, that I speedily replaced my tunics by the dresses the princesses ordinarily wore, and covered their arms with long sleeves. The truth is that the Empress had said nothing of the kind; for she had the goodness to assure me of this the very next time I saw her. I had none the less spoilt the arrangement of my picture, without counting that their pretty arms, which I had painted in my best manner, were no longer seen. I remember that Paul, when Emperor, reproached me one day for having changed the costume that I had at first given to his daughters. I told him at once how it had occurred, on which he shrugged his shoulders and said: "It was a trick played on you." I may add that it was not the only one, for Zouboff did not like me. His malevolence towards me was proved on another occasion in the following manner. Crowds came to my rooms to see the portraits of the Grand-Duchesses and my other works. As I did not wish to lose all my mornings, I had fixed Sunday morning to open my studio, as I had always done in the countries I had visited. My rooms faced the palace; the carriages of all those who came to make their court to the Empress, had only to turn to arrive at once at my door. Zouboff, who could not imagine apparently that crowds could care to visit a painter, merely

for the sake of seeing her paintings, said one day to Her Majesty : " Do you see, Madame, they go also to pay their court to Madame Le Brun ; it is surely assignations that they make at her house." Happily for me these insinuations had no effect on the elevated mind of the Empress, neither did she take notice of the perfidy of her favourite ; but the Prince de Nassau, who heard the remark, came at once to inform me of it, he was so indignant.

Why Zouboff did not like me, I have never rightly been able to guess. He was, I know, the protector of Lampi, a skilful portrait painter, who was established at St. Petersburg ; but Lampi was always very good to me. The day after my arrival, he called and invited me to dinner. I remember that the dinner was quite *recherché*, and that during the repast, we were treated to an excellent selection of music. Though I have been assured that I excited the jealousy of Lampi, I have since learnt to the contrary, that he praised my works, and said he could not do as well.

It is possible that the favourite was ill-disposed towards me, because I had seemed to neglect his patronage. Zouboff liked people to ask for his support ; but pride has always made me fear that people might attribute to protection the success I desired to obtain ; whether right or wrong, I wished to owe my reputation and fortune to my palette. Zouboff must have found it difficult to understand my mode of proceeding, since he had a whole Court at his feet. Intoxicated by the favour which became more and more marked, I am told he often treated the ministers and nobles with extreme insolence. From early morning, the greatest personages of the Court waited in

the ante-chambers the moment that his door was opened ; for he had a *lever*, like Louis XIV., after which they retired, happy to have assisted at the toilette of Platon Zouboff, above all if he had honored them with a smile.

As soon as I had finished the portraits of the Grand-Duchesses, the Empress commanded me to take that of the Grand-Duchess Elizabeth, recently married to Alexander. I have already said what an enchanting person this Princess was ; I should have preferred to have painted her according to my imagination, instead of in the ordinary costume of the day ; but since this was not to be, I painted her full length, in court dress, arranging flowers in a basket. I went to her for the sitting and was shown into her divan, a name given to immense *salons* surrounded by a large divan ; this *salon* was hung in pale blue velvet, edged with silver fringe. The Grand-Duchess speedily appeared, dressed in a white robe, such as she wore the first time I saw her ; it was still Psyche, and her manner so sweet, so gracious, joined to her charming face, made me admire her doubly.

When I had finished her large portrait, she made me take another for her mother, in which I painted her with a transparent violet shawl, leaning against a cushion. I can say that the more I saw of her, the more I found her manner kind and loveable. One morning, when she was giving me a sitting, a sudden giddiness seized me, my eyes seemed to be full of sparks ; she became much alarmed, and ran herself to fetch me water, and bathed my eyes, caring for me with the greatest solicitude, and on my return home sent at once to inquire how I was.

I also at the same time made the portrait of the Grand-Duchess Anne, wife of the Grand-Duke Constantine. She was a Princess of Coburg, and though not possessing such a heavenly face as that of her sister-in-law, was not less lovely and bewitching. She might have been sixteen years of age, and the liveliest gaiety reigned in all her features. This Princess, however, had not known much happiness in Russia.

If we may say that Alexander took after his mother by his beauty and character, we know that it was not thus with Constantine, who resembled his father, without being as ugly, and who also, like him, had a fearful temper. It is true that sometimes Constantine showed much kindness and goodness of disposition ; when he loved, he loved well ; but with the exception of those persons who had found the road to his heart, his rages and violence rendered him terrible to all who approached him. Amongst different singular stories told of him, it is said, that on the evening of his wedding-day, at the moment of retiring to his wife, he went into a horrible rage against a soldier of the guard who had not paid sufficient attention to his countersign. This scene was prolonged in such an extraordinary manner, that all the people of the Court, who accompanied him, could not conceive how he could remain such a long time ill-treating a soldier on duty, instead of going at once to the young and lovely woman he had that morning married. Shortly after his marriage, he became very jealous of his brother Alexander, which created violent quarrels between himself and the Duchess Anne, who was indignant at his suspicions. These differ-

ences got to such a point, that it resulted at last in a divorce. The Princess returned at first to her parents, but later on, when I was in Switzerland, I found her settled there.

There is every reason to believe, that the Grand-Duchess Elizabeth, that angel of beauty, was not more happy than her sister-in-law, in retaining the heart of her husband. The love of Alexander for a charming Pole whom he married to Prince Narischkin, is known to all Europe. I saw Madame Narischkin, when very young, at the Court of St. Petersburg. She and her sister arrived there after the death of their father, who was killed in the last war with Poland. The eldest of the two might have been sixteen years of age. They were quite lovely ; they danced with the most perfect grace, and soon one made the conquest of Alexander, and the other that of Constantine. Madame Narischkin was the most regularly beautiful ; her figure was fine and supple, her face was purely Greek, which made her extremely remarkable ; but she had not to my mind the exquisite charm of the Grand-Duchess Elizabeth.

At this period the Court of Russia was composed of such a great number of charming women, that a ball at the Empress's was a beautiful sight. I was present at one that she gave. The Empress, splendidly dressed, was seated at the end of the reception room, surrounded by the chief persons of the Court. Near her stood the Grand-Duchess Marie, Paul, Alexander, who were superb, and Constantine, all standing. An open balustrade separated them from the dancers.

The dance was simply a *polonaise*, which I took part in

with the young Prince Bariatinski, so as to make a tour of the ball-room, after which I seated myself on a raised form so as to have a better view of the dancers. It would be impossible to mention how many pretty women passed before me ; but the beauty of the Imperial Family surpassed all others. The four Grand-Duchesses were dressed *à la grecque*, with tunics that fastened on the shoulders with large diamond buckles. I had arranged the toilette of the Grand-Duchess Elizabeth, so that her costume was the most correct ; Paul's two daughters, Hélène and Alexandrine, wore veils of clear blue gauze spotted with silver, which had a fairy-like appearance.

The magnificence of the Empress's surroundings, the richness of the room, the number of beautiful persons, the profusion of diamonds, with the light of a thousand candles, had a magical effect.

A few days after this ball, I went to a dinner party at Court. When I entered the dining-hall, the guests were already assembled awaiting the arrival of the Empress. Large folding doors were thrown open and she appeared. I have said that she was short, but on days of ceremony her majestic walk and eagle glance gave her the appearance of height, and to me she seemed the queen of the world ; she wore the grand cordons of three orders, and her costume was simple and noble ; it consisted of a muslin tunic, embroidered in gold, with a girdle of diamonds. Above the tunic she wore a crimson velvet dolman, with short sleeves. The cap, which seemed a frame to her white hair, was not trimmed with ribbon, but with diamonds of great beauty.

When Her Majesty was seated, all the ladies seated themselves, and each placed their napkins over their knees. The Empress fastened hers with pins, similar to a child. She soon perceived that the ladies ate nothing, and said to them: "Mesdames, you will not follow my example, you only make a pretence of eating. For myself, I always take the precaution of fastening my napkin under my chin, for otherwise I should not be able to eat an egg without throwing it all over my collar."

I saw, in fact, that she made a very good dinner. A beautiful selection of music was played during the repast. The musicians were placed at the end of the hall under a canopy. I love to hear music during dinner, and the only thing that has ever made me wish to be a very great lady, or very rich, is the desire to hear music at those times. I prefer it to all the conversation of the people with whom one dines, notwithstanding as the Abbé Delille says "that often morsels gossiped over, cause them to digest much better."

Talking of dinners, I must not omit to say that the dullest one I partook of at St. Petersburg, took place at the house of Zouboff's sister, to whom I had so long neglected to present my letter of introduction. Six months had passed after my arrival in Russia, when I met her one evening on leaving the theatre. She came up to me and said in a most amiable manner, that she was always expecting to receive a letter that had been given to me for her. Not knowing what excuse to make, I replied that I had lost it; but that I would search for it again, and would send it her at once. She invited me to dine with her, and having accepted her invitation, I went to

her house. The dinner hour at St. Petersburg at all houses is from two to half-past ; my daughter accompanied me. We were shown into a gloomy room, without my being able to discover any signs of dinner. One o'clock, two o'clock passed, still nothing appeared, at last two servants entered and arranged some card tables, and though it seemed strange that people should eat in a drawing-room, I flattered myself we should soon be served ; but not at all, the servants left the room, and shortly afterwards, guests arrived and at once sat down to cards. Towards six o'clock, my poor child and myself became so famished that on looking at ourselves in the glass we were really pitiable objects. I felt as though I was dying, and it was only at half-past seven that dinner was announced ; but our poor stomachs had suffered too much, it was impossible to eat. I learnt afterwards that the Comtesse D——— was intimately acquainted with Lord Wilford, and dined to please him at the hour they dine in London. The Comtesse ought to have told me this ; but perhaps the sister of the favourite felt persuaded that all the world knew the hour when she sat down to table.

In general, nothing annoyed me more than dining out ; I was nevertheless, sometimes obliged to do so, above all in Russia, as I should have given much offence if I had invariably refused. The greatest magnificence presided at these repasts ; the cooks were nearly always French, and the fare exquisite. A quarter of an hour before dinner, a servant always brought in a tray of liqueurs, and slices of thin bread and butter. No one takes liqueur after dinner ; but always excellent Malaga.

It is the custom that noble ladies, even in their own houses, go in to table before the guests they have invited, so that frequently the Princesse Dolgorouki and others would take my arm in order to make me go in with them ; for it is impossible to be more polite than Russian ladies. I may almost go so far as to say they are devoid of that pride which is the reproach of so many of our French ladies.





CHAPTER XVIII.

The Cold at St. Petersburg—The Russian People—Gentleness of their Manners—Their Probity and Intelligence—Comte Golovin—The Melting of the Ice on the Neva—Salons of St. Petersburg—The Theatre—Madame Hus—Mandini—Comtesse Strogonoff—Princesse Dolgo Kourakin.



F one stayed in doors all day, no one would know that winter had arrived, to such a perfection have the Russians carried the art of heating their apartments. From the hall door, every part is heated by the most excellent stoves, so that the open fires kept up are merely a luxury. The staircases and the corridors are of the same temperature as the rooms, where the doors remain open as in summer. It is said that when the Emperor Paul, then Grand-Duke, visited France, under the name of the Prince du Nord, he said to the Parisians: "At St. Petersburg we see the cold, but here we feel it." Also, when I had passed seven years in Russia and had returned to Paris, where I found the Princesse Dolgorouki, I recollect one day we felt so dreadfully cold sitting close to a fire, that we said: "We must go and spend a winter in Russia to get warm."

In going into the open air so many precautions are taken, that even strangers scarcely feel the severity of the

climate. Every one wears in their carriages large velvet boots, lined with fur, and cloaks also thickly wadded and made of fur. At seventeen degrees Reaumur, the theatres are closed, and everyone remains at home. I was, I believe, the only one, perhaps, who, not understanding the danger, went one day, when the thermometer stood at eighteen degrees, to call on the Comtesse Golovin. She lived at some little distance from me, in the fine street, the Nevski Prospect, and from my house till I reached hers, I did not meet a single carriage, which greatly surprised me. The cold was such that at first I thought the carriage windows must be open. When the Comtesse saw me enter her *salon*, she exclaimed: "*Mon Dieu!* how could you have come out on such an evening? do you not know that the thermometer is nearly twenty degrees?" At these words I thought of my poor coachman, and without taking off my pelisse, I ran away from the Comtesse and quickly returned to my own house. But my head had been seized by the cold to such a degree that I was quite giddy. They rubbed me with Eau de Cologne to warm me, otherwise I should have gone mad.

One most surprising circumstance is the very slight impression the rigorous temperature has on the lower classes. Far from their health suffering, I find it is in Russia that the greater number of centenarians exist. At St. Petersburg, as at Moscow, the great nobles and all the notables of the empire travel with from six to eight horses; their postillions are small boys between eight and ten years of age, who guide them with an address and dexterity really remarkable. Two of these boys are employed for eight

horses, and it is very curious to see these little urchins dressed very lightly, and sometimes with their shirts open on their chests, remain gaily exposed to a cold that would certainly kill a French or Prussian Grenadier. I contented myself with two horses to my carriage, and was often astonished at the gentleness and resignation of the coachman ; never did I hear a word of complaint. In the most severe weather, when these men have to wait for their masters at the theatre or the ball, they remain there without moving, only you see them sometimes, beating their hands and feet to warm them, whilst the little postillions stretch themselves at the bottom of the staircase. I must, however, say that the coachmen are all provided with warm gloves and coats, and when the cold exceeds a certain degree, if any noble wishes to give a ball or reception, he distributes among the men strong drinks, and wood for bivouac fires in the courts and the street.

The Russian people are as a rule ugly ; but they have a straightforward honest bearing, and are the best people in the world. You never meet a drunken man, though their habitual drink is the strongest brandy. The greater number of the Russians live on potatoes and garlic mixed with oil, and they smell of it, notwithstanding that they bathe every Saturday. This poor food does not prevent them singing at the top of their voices, whilst working or rowing their boats.

The Russians are skilful and intelligent, for they learn all sorts of handicraft with amazing facility ; many even obtain success in the arts. One day at the Comte Strogoff's I met a young man, his architect, who had once been

his sert ; this man had shown so much talent that the Comte presented him to the Emperor Paul, who made him one of his architects, and ordered him to build a theatre from the plans he had made and submitted to him. I did not see the theatre finished, but I am told it was very fine.

The domestics are remarkable for their intelligence. I had one who did not know a word of French, and I did not know a word of Russian ; but we understood each other perfectly without the help of speech. I could ask for anything by raising my hand, and he was never at a loss, and served me admirably. Another precious quality that I discovered in him, was a thoroughly conscientious fidelity ; I was frequently paid for my pictures in bank notes, and when I was occupied in painting, I would place them by me on the table. On leaving my work, I constantly forgot to take them away, and they remained often three or four days there, without my losing one. His sobriety was wonderful, I never on any occasion saw him intoxicated. This good servant was called Peter ; he wept when I left St. Petersburg, and I have always regretted him. The Russian people are in general very honest and gentle. At St. Petersburg and Moscow, I never heard of a great crime, or even of a theft. This honest and peaceful conduct is surprising in men who are still not far from being barbarians, and many people attribute it to the state of serfdom which exists in Russia ; for my own part I attribute their honesty and other good qualities to their being extremely religious. Shortly after my arrival in St. Petersburg I went to visit the daughter-in-law of my old friend, the Comte Strogonoff. Her house at Kaminostroff was situ-

ated to the right of the great road which borders the Neva. I left my carriage at a little wicker gate which opened on to the garden, through which I passed to reach the drawing-room on the ground floor, the door of which I found wide open. It was very easy therefore to enter the house of the Comtesse Strogonoff; so when I found her in a small boudoir and she showed me her own apartments, I was surprised to see all her diamonds lying exposed on a table; close to the window which opened on to the garden, and was consequently close to the high road. This appeared all the more imprudent, because the Russian ladies are in the habit of spreading their diamonds and other jewellery under glass cases, as it is seen in jeweller's shops. "Madame," I said, "are you not afraid of being robbed?" "No," she replied, "here are my best police," and she pointed out, placed above the jewellery, several images of the Virgin, and Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of Russia, before which burnt a lamp. It is a fact, that during the seven years I passed in Russia, I have always noticed that on all occasions the image of the Virgin, or of a saint, and the presence of a child, has always been held sacred by a Russian.

The lower class, in addressing you, invariably call you according to your age, as "mother, father, brother, or sister," and this does not even except the Emperor or Empress, and all the Imperial family.

Among the middle class of Russians, many are very well off. The merchants' wives for example spend a great deal on their toilette, without its appearing to cause any stint in their households. Many of the farmers also

are very rich. I recollect that one day on arriving for dinner at the Comte Golovin's, I found in the *salon* a tall, stout man, who had all the appearance of a well-to-do peasant. When dinner was announced, I saw this man sit down with us, which struck me as being so extraordinary, that I asked the Comtesse in a low voice who he was. "He is my husband's farmer," she said, "who has come to lend him sixty thousand roubles, so that we may settle some of our debts ; the kindness of this good farmer is decidedly worthy of the dinner we give him." Nothing was more natural, in fact ; but that which ought to have appeared less so, was that the Comte Golovin, with the large fortune he had inherited, should be in need of funds and obliged to borrow from his own farmer ; but I had already observed how extravagantly Russian nobles spend their money ; to say truth, they are infinitely more magnificent than the French. The consequence of this extraordinary luxury (to which our own cannot be at all compared) is, that if you wish to be paid, you must apply to them just before the 1st of January and the 1st of July, the time when they receive their rents ; otherwise you run the risk of finding them without money. As long as I was in ignorance of this custom, I often had to wait for the payment of the portraits I had made. Comte Golovin was one of the best creatures in the world, but he had no management. The Comtesse Golovin was a charming woman, full of wit and talent. She drew very well, and composed pretty songs, which she sang accompanying herself at the piano. Besides all this, she was *au courant* of all the literary news of Europe, which I be-

lieve was known to her before it even reached Paris. Her most intimate friend, the Comtesse Tolstoi, was both beautiful and good, but was much less animated than the Comtesse Golovin; and perhaps the contrast in their characters had formed and cemented their intimacy.

When the month of May arrives at St. Petersburg, one hears nothing of spring flowers, or the song of the nightingale, so much vaunted by poets. The ground is covered with melting snow; the Neva is filled with enormous rocks of ice heaped on each other, and these icebergs bring back the cold which begins to lessen after the melting of the Neva. The breaking up of the ice on this river may be called a beautiful but horrible sight; the noise of it is frightful; for near the Bourse, the Neva is three times the width of the Seine at the Pont-Royal; the effect produced by this sea of ice breaking up in all parts may therefore be imagined. In spite of the soldiers on guard that are stationed the whole length of the quays to prevent people from jumping from block to block, the rash ones would constantly venture on the moving ice to gain the opposite bank. Before undertaking this dangerous crossing, they make the sign of the cross, and spring on to the ice, being quite convinced that if they perished they were fated to do so. During the breaking up of the ice, the first who crosses the Neva in a boat presents a silver cup to the Emperor, who returns it to him filled with gold.

The windows of the houses at this period still remain hermetically closed, for Russia has no spring, but vegetation hastens to regain lost time. You may almost say you

see the leaves growing. I went one day with my daughter to walk in the summer garden, it was in the month of May ; and wishing to assure myself that all that had been said of the rapidity of the vegetation was true, we particularly remarked the arbutus leaves which were still in bud. We made one tour of the garden, then having returned to the place we had left, we found the buds open and the leaves entirely spread.

The Russians make the best of their severe climate, and during the period of the greatest cold, have sledging parties, sometimes by day, and sometimes at night with torches.

One of the finest ceremonies that it is possible to witness, is the benediction of the Neva. It takes place every year, and the Archimandrite gives the benediction in the presence of the Emperor, the Imperial Family, and all the great dignitaries of the State. As at this period the ice on the Neva is at the least three feet thick, a large hole is dug in it, out of which after the ceremony is over, every one stoops to touch the Holy Water. Frequently you see women dip their young children into this icy bath ; sometimes these unhappy women let these poor little victims of superstition slip into the water ; but then, instead of weeping the loss of their child, the mother congratulates herself on the happiness of the angel who has gone to pray for her. The Emperor is obliged to drink the first glass of water, which the Archimandrite presents to him.

I have already said that in order to judge of the cold at St. Petersburg, one must go into the streets. The Russians are not content with giving their apartments the

temperature of spring, but their windows are crowded with the loveliest flowers, which we only see in the month of May. In winter the apartments are lighted in the most profuse manner. They are perfumed with warm vinegar, into which is thrown branches of mint, which gives a very agreeable and wholesome odour. All the rooms are surrounded by long and large divans, on which both men and women establish themselves. I became so accustomed to this manner of sitting, that I could not feel comfortable on a chair.

The Russian ladies bow their heads in salutation, which appears to me much more graceful than our curtsies. They do not ring for their servants, but call them by clapping their hands together, as the Sultanas are said to do in the seraglios. Every Russian lady has a man in livery, who remains always at the door to open it to visitors. But what appeared most strange to me, was that some of the ladies had a female slave to sleep under their beds.

Every evening I went out. Not only the balls, concerts, theatres, were frequent, but I delighted in the evening parties, where I found all the urbanity and grace of French society ; for to use an expression of the Princesse Dolgorouki, it appeared as though good taste had bounded from Paris to St. Petersburg. The houses regularly open to visitors were numerous, and in all of them I was received in the most amiable manner. People met about eight o'clock, and supper was at ten. In the interval I had tea ; but the tea in Russia is so excellent that, though I could not drink it myself, I was scented with its perfume.

Two houses extremely sought, were those of the Princesse Michael Galitzin, who had frequently visited Paris, where she married one of her daughters to a Frenchman, M. le Comte de Caumont, and the Princesse Dolgorouki; there existed a sort of rivalry between these ladies relative to their *soirées*. The first, less beautiful than the Princesse Dolgorouki, was prettier. She was very witty, but fantastic to excess. She would look annoyed with you all at once, and without cause, then a moment afterwards would say the most amiable and flattering things. The Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier was so madly in love with her, that her caprices and eccentric humour only seemed to augment his passion. It was curious to witness the bow down to the ground with which he greeted the Princesse, whenever they met; this was at that time the mark of respect shown to any lady, whom the gentleman did not wish to compromise.

The suppers at the Princesse Dolgorouki's were charming; one met there the corps diplomatique, and all the most distinguished foreigners; everyone in fact delighted to go there, the mistress of the house was so amiable. She always kept me a seat in her box at the theatre.

No woman, I believe, had ever more dignity in her person and manners than the Princesse Dolgorouki; as she had seen my "Sybil," which she greatly praised, she begged me to take her portrait in that character, and I had the pleasure of giving her entire satisfaction. When the portrait was completed, she sent me a very handsome carriage, and put on my arm a bracelet, made of a tress of hair, on which diamonds were arranged in such a manner

that one read : *Ornez celle qui orne son siècle*. I was extremely touched at the grace and delicacy of such a present.

I frequently met Comte Strogonoff, with his son and daughter-in-law. She was young, pretty, and clever. Her husband, who at the most was twenty-five years of age, was a delightful man. An actress from Paris turned his head. The Comtesse perceived his infidelity, and as she loved him much she suffered greatly, but never spoke on the subject to him. The young Comte kept this actress, Mademoiselle Lachassaigne, in the greatest luxury; she had a child, and he at once gave her a pension of six thousand roubles. During the war with France he was killed; but the young Comtesse still continued the pension to the actress. This action appears to me so noble and good that further eulogium would be unnecessary.

The good kind Princesse Kourakin did not entertain much; but one met her every evening in society, principally at the house of the Princesse Dolgorouki, where it was a happiness to meet her. It was impossible to see her twice without loving her. Her genial nature and goodness of disposition were such, that I used to call her a child of seven years; she charmed everyone, and gained all hearts; I do not wish anyone to imagine that the tender friendship I felt for her caused me to exaggerate by flattery her memory. Princesse Kourakin came to Paris, where she remained a long while; Madame de Bawr, M. de Sabran, M. Briffaut knew her and were her friends; they could say if my sorrow for her loss blinded me, and if society did not lose in her one of its brightest ornaments.



CHAPTER XIX.

The Lake of Pergola—Island of Krestowski—My letter to Cléry, valet to Louis XVI.—His Answer—I paint a portrait of Marie Antoinette for the Duchesse d'Angoulême.



GREAT delight it was to me, when after having for months inhaled the icy air out of doors or that heated from within by stoves, I at last saw the spring arrive. Walking became a pleasure, and I hastened to visit the lovely environs of St. Petersburg. I often went to the Lake of Pergola with my faithful Russian servant, to take what I called a fresh air bath.

I amused myself with contemplating its pure and limpid waters which reflected like a mirror the surrounding trees. My good Peter prepared my little dinner meanwhile, or else gathered a bouquet of wild flowers which he afterwards presented to me ; I involuntarily thought of Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday.

The heat being excessive, I often walked very early with my daughter on the Island of Krestowski. The heat at St. Petersburg is often very intense. I remember once during the month of July, I forget in what year, finding the Princesse Bariatinski seated in her cellar with her lady companion, who was on one of the lowest steps reading aloud. But to return to the Island of Krestowski, as we

were boating we met numbers of men and women bathing promiscuously. We even saw in the distance some nude young men on horseback, who were thus bathing both themselves and their horses. In any other country such indecent behaviour would not have been permitted ; but it is not the same in one where perfect innocence reigns. None thought of evil, for the Russians are really most ingenuous. In their families, during the winter, the husband, wife, and children all sleep together round their stove, and if that is not large enough they lie stretched out on benches, covered only by their sheep-skins. They have preserved the customs of the ancient Patriarchs.

During one summer I hired a small house on the banks of the Neva ; the following one young Count Strogonoff lent me a charming house at Kaminostroff, where I enjoyed myself immensely. Every morning I walked in the neighbouring forest and spent my evenings with the Comtesse Golovin, who was living near. I met the young Prince Bariatinski, Princesse Tarente, and many other amiable people at her house. We talked or read aloud till supper ; in fact, my time passed most agreeably.

The peace and happiness I enjoyed did not prevent my thinking very often of France and her troubles. I was always pursued by the thought of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, so that my greatest desire was to execute a painting representing them in one of the solemn and touching moments which preceded their death. I have already stated that I had studiously avoided any knowledge of the details which led to their sad fate, but afterwards I had to hear them to create any interest thereby.

I knew that Cléry had taken refuge in Vienna, after the death of his illustrious master ; I wrote and informed him of my intentions, begging him to help me in carrying them out. Shortly after I received the following letter* which I have always preserved, and copy word for word here :

“ Madame,

“ The great knowledge you possess of the personages composing the august family of Louis XVI. made me say to Madame la Comtesse de Rombeck, that none but you could depict the heartbreaking scenes borne by this unhappy family in the course of its captivity. Such interesting details deserve to descend to posterity, and the brush of Madame Le Brun can alone reproduce them faithfully.

“ Amongst these painful scenes, six might be taken for paintings :

“ 1st. Louis XVI. in prison, surrounded by his family, giving lessons in geography and reading to his children ; the Queen and Madame Elizabeth meanwhile are employed in sewing and mending their clothes.

“ 2nd. The separation of the King and his son on the 11th of December.

“ 3rd. Louis XVI. being interrogated in the tower by four members of the Convention, and surrounded by his counsel : MM. de Malesherbes, de Sèze, and Tronchet.

“ 4th. The executive counsel informing the King of

* M. J. Tripier le Franc is now possessor of this very precious document.

his sentence to death, Gronvelle reading aloud the sentence.

“5th. The King saying farewell to his family, the eve of his death.

“6th. His departure from the tower to the place of torture.

“The one of these scenes which most affects people is the parting. An engraving was made on this subject in England ; but it is not at all truthful, either in the resemblances to the people or in the locality.

“I shall endeavour, Madame, to give you the necessary details so that you may be able to sketch this picture. The room where this scene passed might be fifteen feet square. The walls are covered with paper representing square stones, which are most suitable for a prison. On the right, near the entrance-door is a large window, and as the walls of the tower are nine feet thick, the window is in a recess of about eight feet long, which diminishes towards the end, where there are some thick iron bars. In the rear of this window is a china stove two feet and a half broad and about three feet high ; the tube passes under the window and is fixed to the left part of the recess near the commencement. From the window to the front wall is about eight feet. On this wall and near the stove is a swinging lamp which lit up the whole room, for the scene passed at night, that is at ten in the evening. The front wall might be fifteen feet wide ; a folding door divided it placed more to the left than to the right. This door was painted gray ; one of the sides ought to be left open to allow of the interior of the bed-room being seen. The left

portion of the room has a glass partition with glass doors either side ; behind this partition is a small room where they all dined. It is in this room that the King sat surrounded by his family and told them of his last wishes. It was on leaving this little dining-room that the King advanced towards the entrance door as though to lead them away, and thus ought this scene to be taken ; it was at the same time the most painful moment for all of them.

“The King was standing, holding the Queen by the right hand, who could barely keep upright ; she leaned on his right shoulder, the Dauphin was on the same side entwined in the arm of the Queen, who pressed him to her side ; he held with his little hands the left one of the Queen, and the King’s right hand, kissing them and bathing them with tears. Madame Elisabeth is on the King’s left, holding in her two hands the upper part of the King’s arm, lifting her eyes, filled with tears, to the skies. Madame Royale is in front holding the left hand of the King, and making the room resound with her mournful wails. The King, always calm, always stately, never shed a tear, but he seemed to be cruelly affected by the sad condition of his family. He said to them in his softest tones, but full of touching expressions : ‘I do not bid you good-bye, rest assured I will see you again to-morrow morning at seven o’clock.’ ‘You promise,’ said the Queen, half audibly. ‘Yes, I promise,’ replied the King ; ‘adieu.’ At this moment the sobs redoubled, Madame Royale fell fainting at the King’s feet, which she held in a firm embrace. Madame Elisabeth tried to support her. The King made a violent effort, and tearing himself from their arms, re-

turned to his room. As I was near Madame Elisabeth, I helped this Princess to support Madame Royale for a few steps ; but I was not permitted to go any farther, and I went back to the King. During this scene, four municipal officers, of whom two were very badly dressed, with their hats on, stood in the window recess, warming themselves by the stove without any apparent emotion. They were decorated with a tricolour riband and a cocade in the middle.

“The King was dressed in a brown coat with a collar, a white piqué vest, grey casimir trowsers and grey silk stockings with gold buckles, very plain ones on his shoes, a muslin collar, the hair rather powdered, a few stray locks, the back hair tied together *en catogan*.

“The Queen, Madame Royale, and Madame Elisabeth, were dressed in white muslin with very simple linen fichus and caps of the same material in the shape called *baigneuses*, edged with a little lace, an handkerchief trimmed also with a little lace, tied above the cap in a three cornered shape.

“The young prince wore a greenish grey casimir, a culotte or trowser of the same, a small white waistcoat, the coat made low and turned back ; the shirt collar plain and falling over that of the coat, the frill being of plaited linen ; black shoes fastened with black ribbons ; blonde hair without powder, falling carelessly on the shoulders, in curls on the forehead, drawn back in a plait behind, the front hair being allowed to fall where it willed.

The Queen's hair was nearly white, that of Madame of a lovely blond, Madame Elisabeth's, blond also, but a

shade darker. There, Madame, are nearly all the details I can give you on the subject ; if they do not suffice, deign to ask me what other questions you like and I will endeavour to reply to them. I only ask of you one thing, which is, that these details may remain private. As I have notes where all these facts are written down, I should not wish them to be known before they are printed. I hope some day you will come and inhabit this town, and if you care to make more paintings on these sad subjects, I shall be happy to make myself agreeable in any way. I pray you to accept Madame my respectful homages.

“Your very humble and obedient servant,

“CLÉRY.

“Vienna, 27th of October, 1796.”

This letter* made such a painful impression on me, that I felt it to be impossible to undertake a work, when each stroke of the brush would have made me burst into tears. I therefore renounced my intentions ; but had the happiness, during my sojourn in Russia, of retracing once more the august and beloved features of her I knew so well ; it was on this occasion.

The Comte de Cossé arrived at St. Petersburg from Mittau, where he had left the Royal Family. He paid me a visit and begged me to go and see the Princes who he

* The notes of which Cléry speaks in his letter, were published by him under the title of : “ Journal de ce qui s'est passé dans la Tour du Temple pendant la Captivité de Louis XVI. ; ” this pamphlet appeared in London for the first time in 1798. Cléry was born at Versailles and in 1809 died at Itzig, in Austria.

said would receive me with pleasure. I felt very grieved at the time to be unable to do so, but my daughter being ill I could not leave her, and besides I had other engagements to fulfil, not only with people of note but with the Imperial Family, for several portraits, which would not permit of my leaving St. Petersburg for some time. I explained all my perplexities to M. de Cossé, and as he did not leave at once to return, I made from memory the Queen's portrait, which I begged him to transmit to Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême, until I could go myself and receive the orders of Her Royal Highness.

This gift procured for me the pleasure of receiving from Madame the following letter, which I preserve as a token of her satisfaction.

“Mittau, 15th of April, 1800.

“The Comte de Cossé had placed in my hands, Madame, the portrait of my mother which you charged him to bring me. You have procured for me the double satisfaction of seeing in one of your most beautiful works an image dear to my heart. You can therefore judge of the gratitude I feel towards you for having employed your rare talents in giving me this proof of your sentiments, and rest assured that I feel all the more affected because I cannot explain to you as I wish my deep feeling. You may always count, Madame, on my sentiments regarding yourself.

“MARIE THÉRÈSE.”

As soon as I was free again I hastened to Mittau, but unfortunately found that the Royal Family had left.



CHAPTER XX.

Catherine—The King of Sweden—The Masked Ball—Death of Catherine—Her Funeral.



HE people lived so happily during the reign of Catherine, that I can positively affirm having heard her blest by both small and great, as one to whom the nation owed so much of its glory and well-being. I shall not write about the conquests which flattered the nation's pride so prodigiously, but of the real and lasting good done by this Sovereign to her people.

During the space of thirty-four years, the time she reigned, her benevolent genius created or protected all that was useful and glorious. In memory of Peter I., she built an imperishable monument of two hundred and thirty-seven stone towns, saying that the wooden villages, which were so easily destroyed by fire, cost her much more. She covered the sea by her fleet; established everywhere manufactories and banks, so essential to the commerce of St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Tobolsk. She accorded new privileges to the Academy; founded schools in all the towns and country districts; built canals and raised granite quays; formed a new code of laws; created an establishment for foundlings; and finally she introduced in her Empire the blessing of vaccination, which her powerful will

alone was capable of imposing on the Russian people, and the better to obtain this result she was inoculated first herself.

All these beneficent actions are due to Catherine alone, for she never gave any real authority to others ; she dictated herself the despatches to her ministers, who were in reality, only her secretaries. It is told of her that Lady Bruce, who had long been her intimate friend, said one day : " I notice that your Majesty's favourites are very young."

" I desire them to be so," she replied : " if they were older, people would say they governed me."

Zouboff, who was the last, was not more than twenty-two at the outside. He was tall, thin, well made, with regular features. I saw him for the first time at a court ball, giving his arm to the Empress and walking with her. He wore at the button-hole, her portrait, set with superb diamonds, and she appeared to treat him most kindly ; nevertheless, all agreed in saying that the one of her favourites whom she had most cared for was Lanskoï. She mourned long for him. She had a tomb erected near the château of Czarkoselo for his remains, whither I was informed she retired very often alone by moonlight. In fact, Catherine the Great, as Prince de Ligne called her, was like a man : one can only speak of her weaknesses as one does of those of Francis I. or Louis XIV., weaknesses which did not influence the happiness of her subjects in any way. I am very sorry that Madame la Duchesse d'Abrantès who has recently published a work on Catherine II., either did not read what was written by the Prince de

Ligne and Comte de Ségur, or else would not submit to these two incontestable authorities. She would more justly have appreciated and admired what distinguishes this great Empress, considered in the light of a Sovereign, and she would have had more respect for the memory of a woman of whom our sex may be proud under so many important respects.

Catherine II. loved whatever was grand in art. She caused to be built at the hermitage saloons like those at the Vatican, and had copied the fifty paintings by Raffaele which ornament them ; she also decorated the Academy with plaster models of the most beautiful antique statues and several paintings by different masters. The Hermitage, which she had erected and placed near her palace, was a model of good taste, and caused the heavy architecture of the Imperial Palace at St. Petersburg to look all the more hideous. It is well known she wrote French with the greatest facility.

I have seen at the Library of St. Petersburg the original manuscript containing the code of laws which she gave to the Russians in French, entirely written by her own hand. Her style, I have been told, was elegant and very concise, which reminds me of a tale about her which I find charming. When General Souwaroff had won the battle of Warsaw, Catherine sent off a courier at once to him, and this courier only carried to the fortunate conquerer an envelope on which she had written with her own hand : "To the Marshal Souwaroff."

This woman whose power was so great was, when alone, the simplest and least exacting of her sex. She rose at

five in the morning, lit her fire and made her coffee. It is related that one day having lit it without knowing that a sweep had gone up the chimney, the man began to swear horribly at her, fancying he had to deal with one of the servants. The Empress hastened to put out the fire, not without laughing at hearing herself thus treated.

As soon as she had breakfasted she wrote her letters, prepared her despatches, and remained alone till nine o'clock. Then she rang for her valets, who sometimes did not answer her bell. One day, for example, impatient at waiting, she opened the door of the room where they sat, and, finding them playing cards, she demanded why they did not come when she rang; whereupon one of them quietly replied that they had wanted to finish their game, and no more was said on the subject. Another time Lady Bruce, who came to see her at all hours, arrived one morning and found her alone seated at her toilette.

"Your Majesty is very lonely," said Lady Bruce.

"What can I do?" replied the Empress, "my waiting-maids have all abandoned me. I tried on a dress, and it fitted so badly I became angry, and they left me. Even Reinette, my first woman-in-waiting, went with the others, and I am waiting till they have regained their good humour.

In the evenings Catherine assembled together a few of her favourite courtiers. She made her grandchildren come also, and they played blind-man's buff and other games till ten, when Her Majesty retired to bed. The Princess Dolgorouki has often told me how much the gaiety and pleasantness shown by the Empress enhanced the charm

of these evening gatherings. The Comte Stackelberg was often present as well as Comte de Ségur, whose wit and agreeableness were appreciated by Catherine. When she broke with France and dismissed this ambassador,* she expressed her regret at losing him. "But," she added, "I am an aristocrat; everybody ought to follow their calling."

The names of the people invited by the Empress to her little evening entertainments, as well as the presence of the youthful Grand-Dukes and Duchesses, ought to have been a sufficient guarantee of the order which reigned there; but there appeared a frightful libel at St. Petersburg accusing Catherine of presiding every evening over dreadful orgies. The author of this infamous pamphlet was discovered and expelled from Russia; but it must be stated that this libelist was a French émigré, distinguished for his cleverness, who had so interested the Empress in his misfortunes that she had housed him most comfortably and given him a pension of twelve thousand roubles! Many persons attributed the death of Catherine to the sorrow caused her by the rupture of the marriage between her grand-daughter the Grand-Duchess Alexandrine, and the young King of Sweden. This Prince arrived at St. Petersburg with his uncle, the Duc de Sudermanie, the 14th of August, 1796. He was only seventeen; he had a good figure, and his proud and dignified air caused him to be respected, young as he was. His education had been excellent, and he was extremely courteous. The Princess whom he had come to marry was fourteen, and very

* The Comte Esterhazy, sent by Louis XVIII., was the French Ambassador, received at the Russian Court when I arrived there.—
(*Author's note.*)

pretty ; he became much in love with her ; I remember that one evening having come to see the portrait of his future fiancée, which I had painted, he gazed at it with so much attention that his hat fell from his hand.

The Empress ardently desired this marriage, but she insisted on her grand-daughter having a clergyman of her own religion at Stockholm, and the young King, notwithstanding all his love for the Duchess Alexandrine, refused to consent to that which was opposed to the laws of his country. Knowing that Catherine had ordered the Patriarch to come and affiance them after the ball to be given that evening, the King would not appear there, in spite of the numerous visits made by M. de Marcoff to induce him to do so. I was then painting the portrait of the Comte Diedrestein ; we both kept on going to the window to see if the young King would give way to so many persuasive arguments, and take the road to the ball ; but he would not yield. Afterwards, from what I heard from the Princesse Dolgorouki, everybody was assembled when the Empress opened the door of her room, and said in a constrained voice :

“Ladies, there will be no ball this evening.”

The King of Sweden and the Duc de Sudermanie quitted St. Petersburg the next morning.

Whether it was sorrow caused by this event, or not, which abridged the days of Catherine, Russia was destined to lose her very soon. The Sunday preceding her death, I went the morning after the mass to present to Her Majesty the portrait I had made of the Grand-Duchess Elizabeth. The Empress came towards me and complimented me about it, and then said : “They insist on your

doing my portrait ; I am very old, but since they desire it so much I will give you the first sitting this day week." The Thursday after, she did not ring at nine o'clock as usual. They waited till ten and even later ; at last the head waiting-maid entered. Not seeing the Empress in her room, she went to the little clothes-cupboard, and as soon as she opened the door the body of Catherine fell to the ground. No one knew at what hour she had been seized with the apoplectic attack which had stricken her down ; but her pulse still beat, therefore they did not lose all hope. I never beheld in my life a more wide-spread consternation. For my part I was so overcome with horror and grief when I heard this terrible news, that my daughter, who was then convalescent, perceived something was wrong, and was much upset in consequence.

After my dinner I rushed to the Princesse Dolgorouki, where the Comte Cobentzel, who went every ten minutes to the Palace to know what was passing, came and gave us tidings. The anxiety was intense, everybody felt it, for not only were they fond of Catherine but they had a great dread of the reign of Paul !

Towards evening Paul arrived from a place near St. Petersburg, which he always inhabited. When he beheld his mother lying before him, nature asserted her rights ; he approached the Empress, kissed her hand, and shed a few tears. At last towards nine in the evening Catherine II. expired, on the 17th of November, 1795. Comte Cobentzel, who saw her breathe her last, came immediately to tell us she was no more.

I confess that it was with fear I left the Princess Dolgorouki, because it was reported all around me that

there was going to be a revolution against Paul. The dense crowd I saw, while going home, in the square of the château, did not tend to reassure me ; nevertheless this crowd was so quiet that I soon thought, and with some truth, that for the present we had nothing to fear. The next day the people again congregated in the square, and demonstrated their grief by the most piteous wails. Old men, young men, and children, called out *matusha* (mother) and said, with tears, that they had lost everything in losing her. The gloom of this day did not augur well for the Prince, who was then ascending his throne.

The body of the Empress remained exposed for six weeks in a large saloon in the château, which was illuminated day and night, and splendidly decorated. Catherine lay on a couch, surrounded by escutcheons, bearing the arms of all the cities in the Empire. Her face was uncovered, her beautiful hand was placed on the bed. All the ladies, of whom some took turns to watch by the body, kissed this hand or pretended to do so ; as for me, I had never done so when she was alive, and I could not do so after death. I avoided looking at the face of Catherine II. even, for it would have been so sadly present in my imagination afterwards.

After his mother's death, Paul caused the body of his father, Peter III., to be exhumed ; it had been buried for thirty-five years in the convent of Alexander Newski. There were only a few bones found in the coffin and one sleeve of the uniform. Paul wished to have the same honours paid to these remains as to those of Catherine. He had them exhibited in the middle of the church of

Cazan, and service was performed by old officers, friends of Peter III., who were obliged by his son to be present, and who were well rewarded in consequence.

The time arrived for the funerals, the coffin of Peter III., on which his son had placed a crown, was transported near that of Catherine, and both were taken to the citadel, that of Peter first; for Paul wished to cast a slight upon his mother's remains. I watched this mournful spectacle from my window, as one might a scene at a play. The coffin of the defunct Emperor was preceded by a guardsman, clad in gold armour from head to foot. The one who walked in front of the Empress's coffin wore only steel armour,* and the assassins of Peter III. were compelled, by command of his son, to carry the ends of the pall which covered him. Paul followed the procession on foot, bare-headed, with his wife and the whole Court, who were very numerous and in deep mourning. The ladies had long trains and huge black veils falling around them. They had to walk thus, in the snow, in fearfully cold weather, from the Palace to the fortress,† which is some distance on the other side of the Neva. I saw several ladies looking nearly dead of cold and fatigue on their return.

Mourning was worn six months. The women had pointed caps coming low on the forehead, which did not improve their appearance at all; but this slight annoyance was as nothing compared to the alarm felt throughout the Empire at the death of Catherine II.

* The cavalier who wore the gold armour died of the fatigue.

† It is in the fortress that all the Russian sovereigns are interred. The tomb of Peter I. is one of the plainest possible.—(*Author's note.*)



CHAPTER XXI.

Paul I.—His Character—Fire at Pergola—Frogères—M. d'Autichamp
—Koutaisoff—Madame Chevalier.



PAUL I., born the 1st of October, 1754, ascended the throne the 12th of October, 1796. What I have already related about the funeral of Catherine shows plainly that the new Emperor did not participate in the grief of the nation, and, moreover, it is well known that he decorated Nicolas Zouboff, who brought him the tidings of his mother's death, with the Order of St. Andrew.

Paul was clever, intelligent and energetic ; but the originality of his character verged on madness. This unlucky Prince had outbursts of kindness and generosity which were often succeeded by fits of rage, and his kindnesses or anger, his favour or displeasure, were entirely caused by some passing caprice. His first act, as soon as he ascended the throne was to exile Platon Zouboff to Siberia, and to confiscate the greater portion of his property. Shortly after, he recalled him, restored him his property, and the whole Court beheld him present this ex-favourite to the Georgian Ambassadors with the greatest affability and load him with kindnesses.

One evening, I was present at a ball given by the Court. Everyone, with the exception of the Emperor, was masked, and men and women wore black dominoes. There was a crush at one of the doors leading from one saloon to another ; a young man, being in a hurry to get in, pushed against a woman who began to shriek. Paul immediately turned to one of his aides-de-camp :

“Go,” said he, “conduct this gentleman to the fortress, and see that he is shut up carefully.”

The aide-de-camp did not delay in returning to say that he had fulfilled this command.

“But,” added he, “Your Majesty ought to know that this young man is very short sighted ; here is a proof of it.”

And he showed him the prisoner’s spectacles which he had brought with him. Paul, after having tried them to assure himself of the truth of the fact, said quickly :

“Run and fetch him and take him to his relations ; I cannot rest till you have returned and I hear that he has gone to his home.”

The slightest departure from Paul’s commands was punished with exile to Siberia, or imprisonment at least, so that from never being able to tell where madness, coupled with arbitrary power, was likely to lead him, people lived in a perpetual terror. Soon no one dared to receive their friends at home ; or if they did so, they took care to close the shutters ; and when there was a ball, the carriages were sent away so as to avoid attracting attention. Everyone was watched for their words or actions, so that I heard it said there was no class of society without its spies. People refrained, as a rule, from speaking about

the Emperor. I remember one day visiting amongst a small circle of friends, and a lady who did not know me, and who was growing bold on this subject stopped short when she saw me enter. The Comtesse Golovin was obliged to say to her before she would continue her discourse :

“You may speak out without fear, it is Madame Le Brun.”

All this sounded rather fearful after having lived under Catherine, who permitted full liberty to each, without being able, it is true, to pronounce the word.

It would take too long to relate on how many futile acts Paul exercised his tyranny. He had ordered everybody to bow to his Palace, even when he was absent. For instance, he forbade round hats to be worn, because he considered they were a sign of Jacobinism. The police knocked off with their sticks all the round hats they met, to the great annoyance of the people, whose ignorance had been the cause of their bareheaded condition. Everybody was compelled to wear powder. When this order was issued, I was painting the portrait of young Prince Bariatinski, and, as I had begged him not to come powdered he had consented not to do so. I saw him arrive one day as white as a sheet.

“What has happened ?” said I.

“I have just seen the Emperor,” said he, still trembling, “I had barely time to rush under a doorway, but I fear he must have recognised me.”

This alarm of Prince Bariatinski was not at all surprising ; person, of all classes felt it also ; for no inhabitant

of St. Petersburg was certain in the morning to sleep that evening in his bed. For my part, I can say I experienced the greatest fright I ever had in my life under Paul's reign. I went to Pergola for the day ; I was accompanied by M. de Rivière, my coachman, and Peter, my good Russian servant. Whilst M. de Rivière was walking about with his gun, trying to shoot birds or rabbits, which I must remark were never much injured by his presence, I remained on the border of the lake, when I suddenly observed the fire which had been lighted to cook our dinner spreading amongst the pines and making great progress. The pines touched each other, Pergola is not far from St. Petersburg. I screamed loudly, whilst calling M. de Rivière, and fear helping us, we four managed to stifle the flames, not until we had cruelly burnt our hands though ; but we thought of the Emperor, of Siberia, and fear, as it may be imagined, gave us courage !

I cannot describe the terror with which Paul inspired me, and can only account for it by knowing how universal was the feeling ; for I must confess that to me he was never otherwise than polite and kind. When I first saw him at St. Petersburg, he immediately remembered I had been presented to him in Paris, under the title of the Comte du Nord. I was very young at that time, and so many years had passed since that I had forgotten him ; but princes are as a rule gifted with the faculty of remembering people and names ; it is with them a natural gift. Amongst the many singular commands with which his reign was distinguished, was one it was very annoying to have to submit to, compelling women as

well as men to get out of their carriages when the Emperor passed. Now, Paul was frequently to be met in the streets of St. Petersburg, seeing that he was always rushing about them, sometimes on horseback attended by a small suite, and often in a sleigh without any escort or sign by which he could be recognised. Nevertheless, people were forced to obey his order, or else run great risks, but all will agree it was cruel in the most biting cold to have suddenly to step into the snow. One day finding myself near when he was passing, my coachman not having seen him, I had only time to call out: "Stop! it is the Emperor!"

But as the door was opened, and I was going to descend the steps, he came out of his sleigh and hastened to prevent my doing so, saying most graciously that his command was not for foreigners and certainly not for Madame Le Brun.

One reason why Paul's kindest whims were not reassuring for the future, was that no man could be more inconstant in his ideas and affections. In the beginning of his reign, for instance, he detested Bonaparte; later on he took such a fancy to him that the portrait of the French hero was kept in his sanctum, and he showed it to everybody. His favour or displeasure was of no duration; Count Strogonoff was, I believe, the only man he never ceased to esteem and like. He was not known to have any favourites amongst the courtiers; but he amused himself a good deal with a French actor, called Frogères, a man of some talent and wit. Frogères entered the Emperor's rooms at all hours without being announced; they

were often to be seen walking in the gardens arm in arm, talking about French literature, which Paul was fond of, and principally of our stage.

This actor was often admitted to the private reunions of the Court, and as he had a decided talent for hoaxing, he indulged it to its fullest extent with some of the highest noblemen present, much to the amusement of the Emperor, but not equally pleasing to the victims of these pranks. The Grand-Dukes themselves were not exempt from the practical jokes of Frogères; who, after Paul's death, did not dare to show himself at the Palace.

The Emperor Alexander met him, when walking alone one day, in the streets of Moscow and called him up.

"Frogères, why have you not been to see me?" said he kindly.

"Sire," replied Frogères, whose fears had vanished, "I did not know your Majesty's address."

The Emperor laughed at this sally, and caused the French actor to be well paid for his remaining engagements, which the poor man had never dared ask for till then.

After having lived for some time under Paul, it was natural that Frogères should dread the resentment of a Sovereign; for Paul was so vindictive, that the greater portion of his misdoings may be attributed to his hatred for the Russian aristocracy, of whom he had had cause for complaint during Catherine's lifetime. He confounded the innocent with the guilty in this dislike, detested the great lords, and took a delight in humiliating those he did not exile. He was very kind to foreigners, on the contrary,

especially towards the French ; and I must say he was always good to the strangers and *émigrés* who came from France. Many of these were most generously assisted by him.

I can mention amongst others the Comte d'Autichamp, who, finding himself at St. Petersburg utterly destitute of resources, invented some elastic slippers which were really very pretty. I bought a pair which I showed that same evening to the Princesse Dolgorouki and several other Court ladies. They were considered charming, and this combined with the interest inspired by the *émigré*, caused several pairs to be ordered. It was not long before the little shoes were brought to the Emperor's notice, who, as soon as he learned the workman's name, had him presented and gave him a nice situation. Unfortunately, it was a position of some confidence, and the Russians were so much offended, that Paul could not leave the Comte d'Autichamp in it for any time ; but he contrived to recompense him so well, that he put him out of the way of want.

Hearing so many instances of this description made me more indulgent towards the Emperor than it did the Russians, whose peace was continually menaced by the foolish caprices of a powerful madman. It would be difficult to give any idea of the fears, discontent, and secret murmuring in the Court which I had known so contented and happy. It may be truthfully stated that whilst Paul reigned, fear ruled everyone.

As it is impossible to torment people without tormenting oneself as well, Paul was far from leading a happy life. He was haunted by the thought that he would die

either by poison or the knife, and this shows how much disorder there was in the conduct of this wretched Prince. Whilst day and night saw him rushing through the streets of St. Petersburg alone, he took the precaution of keeping a cooking apparatus in his room, and the rest of his kitchen arrangements were conducted with the utmost secrecy.

The whole was superintended by the faithful Koutaisoff, a confidential servant, who had followed him from Paris and never left his person. This Koutaisoff was devoted to the Emperor, and not even jealousy could make him change in his feelings towards him; for Paul did him a bad turn in taking his mistress from him, the prettiest actress in the St. Petersburg theatre. She was a Madame Chevalier and acted very successfully in comic operettas. Her face and voice were charming, and she sang with much feeling and expression. Koutaisoff was passionately fond of her, when the Emperor followed suit, which so troubled the poor man that his reason nearly left him, and his situation suffered also, as will be seen hereafter in a terrible manner.

Paul was extremely ugly. A flat nose, and very large mouth full of long teeth, made him resemble a death's head. His eyes were very piercing, but could look soft at times. He was neither fat nor thin, and of medium height, and although he had a somewhat distinguished carriage, his face was just the one for a caricature; so that, notwithstanding the danger of such a pastime, numbers were forthcoming. One amongst others represented him holding a paper in each hand: one was written *order*; on the other

counter order; and on his forehead, *disorder*. The mere recollection of this caricature makes me shiver; for one felt that it was a matter of death, not only for the one who had composed it, but for all who had even produced it.

Nevertheless, St. Petersburg was not an unpleasant residence for an artist. The Emperor Paul loved and protected the fine arts. Being fond of French literature, he attracted and retained by his generosity the actors to whom he was indebted for the knowledge of our masterpieces, and none possessing a talent for music or painting could pass unnoticed by him.

Doyen, my father's friend, and the historical painter I have already spoken about several times, was as much patronised by Paul I. as he was by Catherine II. Although very aged at the time, Doyen, who had a very simple and frugal way of living, would only accept a portion of the generous offers made by the Empress. The Emperor continued the same generosity, and ordered a ceiling for the new Palace of St. Michel which was not yet furnished.

The room where Doyen worked was near the Hermitage; Paul and the whole Court crossed it to go to mass, and it was seldom that the Emperor did not stop to have a chat with the painter in a most friendly manner. This reminds me that one day a nobleman following him went up to Doyen and said :

"Allow me, Sir, to make an observation; you are painting the Hours dancing around the chariot of the Sun; I see one over there much farther off, smaller than the rest; and yet the Hours are all alike."

"Sir," replied Doyen, with much gravity, "you are quite right, but the one you speak of is only half an hour."

The inquirer made a sign of approval and retired very pleased with himself.

I must not omit to say that the Emperor, wishing to pay the price of the ceiling before it was terminated, sent Doyen a bank note for a considerable sum, whose value I forget ; but it was wrapped in a paper on which Paul had written. "Here is something with which to buy colours : as for the oil, there still remains plenty in the lamp."

If my father's old friend was pleased with his fortune at St. Petersburg, I was none the less pleased with mine. I worked unceasingly from morning to evening. Only on Sundays I lost two hours, which I was obliged to give to those who wished to visit my studio ; amongst the number were often the Grand-Dukes and Grand-Duchesses. Besides the paintings of which I have spoken and numerous portraits, I had procured from Paris my picture of Queen Marie Antoinette, the one in which I painted her in a blue velvet dress—the interest it caused gave me great pleasure. Prince de Condé, then at St. Petersburg, having come to see it, did not say a word but burst into tears.

I might have imagined myself in Paris in those days, there were so many French present at the parties. I met once more the Duc de Richelieu and Comte de Langeron ; but they were quite residents, the first being Governor of Odessa and the second always employed for any military inspections ; but it was not the same case with other compatriots. I renewed acquaintance with the amiable and excellent Comtesse Ducrest de Villeneuve. Not only was

she pretty, but very kind-hearted. I often saw her, both at St. Petersburg and at Moscow ; one day when I was going to dine with her, I met with an accident, which is not uncommon in Russia, but which terrified me exceedingly. M. de Villeneuve came to fetch me in a sleigh ; it was so cold that my forehead was quite frost bitten. I called aloud in my horror, "I cannot think ! I shall not be able to paint again !" M. de Villeneuve took me quickly into a shop where I was rubbed with snow, and this remedy, employed by all Russians in such cases, soon cured my complaint. Every day increased the circle of my acquaintance. I often met M. Demidoff, the wealthiest private gentleman in Russia. His father had left him such a goodly heritage of iron and other mines, that his fortune was continually increasing. His great wealth caused him to be married to a Strogonoff, a descendant of one of the noblest and most ancient families in Russia. Their union was a very happy one ; although his wife was very charming and graceful, he never, I believe, cared much for her, but she lived very contentedly with him nevertheless. They only left two sons, one of whom lives generally in Paris, and like his father, is a great patron of painting.





CHAPTER XXII.

Portrait of the Empress Marie—The Grand-Dukes—The Archimandrite—Fête at Peterhoff—The King of Poland—His Death—Joseph Poniatowski.



HAVING been ordered by the Emperor to paint a portrait of the Empress, his wife, I represented her on foot, wearing a court dress and a crown of diamonds. I do not care to paint diamonds, the brush cannot give them sufficient brilliancy. But by making a background of a crimson velvet curtain, which brought out the crown into relief, I managed to make it as brilliant as it was possible to do. When I had the painting in my own rooms to finish it, they wished to lend me the court dress with the diamonds as well, but I refused this mark of confidence which would have made me live in a state of terror; I preferred to paint them at the Palace, and had my painting carried back accordingly.

The Empress Marie was a handsome woman; and from being rather stout, looked still fresh. She was tall, and commanding, with splendid fair hair. I remember seeing her once at a ball with her beautiful curly locks falling each side of her shoulders, surmounted by a coronet of diamonds; this tall and stately figure rose majestically by the side of Paul, forming a striking contrast. A noble

disposition was added to so much beauty ; the Empress Marie was really like the woman spoken of in the Bible, and her virtues were so well known that she was perhaps the only instance of a woman, whom calumny dared not attack. I confess that I felt proud at being honoured by her notice, and the nice ways in which she always showed her kindness.

Our sittings always took place after the Court dinner, so that the Emperor and his two sons, Alexander and Constantine, were often present. These august personages did not make me feel at all embarrassed, as the Emperor, the only one I feared, was always good to me. One day he brought me my cup of coffee himself, as I was standing at my easel, waited till I had finished it and took it away again. Once he made me witness a rather curious scene. I had placed a screen behind the Empress, so as to have a stationary background. During one of the pauses, Paul began to cut all sorts of capers, like a monkey, scratching at the screen and pretending to climb over it; this game lasted some time. Alexander and Constantine were evidently grieved at seeing their father behave in such a remarkable manner before a stranger, and it made me feel uncomfortable also.

During one of my sittings, the Empress brought her two younger sons, the Grand-Duke Nicholas and the Grand-Duke Michael. I never saw a finer child than the Grand-Duke Nicholas, afterwards Emperor. I could almost paint him from memory even now, so much did I admire his lovely face, quite Grecian in its character.

I also remember one whose type of beauty was quite different, as he was an old man. Although the Emperor

in Russia is the head of the Church, as well as of the Army and State, religious power is exercised under him by the first Pope, called "the great Archimandrite," who is to the Russians what the Pope is for us. Since I had lived in St. Petersburg, I had often heard of the merits and virtues of him who filled this post, and one day, several of my acquaintances who often saw him having suggested my accompanying them, I willingly accepted their offer.

He was a strikingly majestic and handsome man, with a long white beard falling below his breast, adding still more to the venerable character of his appearance. The gravity of his rank did not prevent him from being gracious and pleasant with everybody. One day, a Princess Galitzin, who was very beautiful, seeing him in a garden, ran and threw herself on her knees before him. The old gentleman at once plucked a rose with which he gave her his benediction.

One of my regrets on leaving Russia was that I had never painted his portrait ; I do not think anyone could have beheld a finer model.

Another personage whom I frequently met and for whom I had a most friendly regard, lived then at St. Petersburg as a private gentleman. It was Stanislas-Auguste-Poniatowski, last King of Poland. In my youth I had often heard about this Prince, who had not then ascended the throne, from several people who had met him at Madame Geoffrin's where he frequently dined.

All who knew him at that time were loud in their praises of his goodness and fine bearing. Whether fortunately or not for him, it is difficult to decide, but he went to St. Petersburg, and Catherine II. took a fancy to the

handsome Pole, and when she ascended the throne, used her best endeavours to make him King of Poland. Poniatowski was crowned on the 7th of October, 1764.

It must be supposed that love in a Sovereign is quickly superseded by ambition, for this same Catherine soon destroyed her work and overthrew the monarchy she had once protected. The destruction of Poland being decided upon, Replin and Stakelberg, Russian Ambassadors, became the actual rulers of this unfortunate kingdom, until the day came when it ceased to exist. Their Court became more numerous than that of the Prince, whom they did not cease to insult and who was King only in name.

Stanislas-Auguste-Poniatowski was kind, good, and very brave, but perhaps he was lacking in that energy which it was necessary for him to possess, in order to restrain the rebellious spirit which reigned in his country. He did his best to be agreeable both to the aristocracy and the nation, and succeeded in some measure ; but there existed too many elements of disorder in the interior and his success would have been a miracle. Therefore he gave way and retired to Grodno, where he lived on a pension made him by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, who between them divided his kingdom.

The Emperor Paul I., after Catherine's death, invited Poniatowski to St. Petersburg to assist at his coronation. During the whole ceremony, which was very long, the ex-king was left standing, which from his advanced age made a painful impression on all who were present. Paul showed himself kinder towards him another time when he pressed him to stay at St. Petersburg, where he lodged him in the marble Palace, which stands on the beautiful

quay of the Neva. By a singular coincidence, this Palace was situated nearly opposite the fortress where Catherine II. is interred.

The King of Poland was otherwise agreeably located. He had formed a very pleasant society around him, mostly composed of Frenchmen, and a few strangers. He was kind enough to seek me out and invite me to his private receptions; he called me his *bonne amie*, as did Prince Kaunitz at Vienna. Nothing affected me more than to hear him say, how happy he should have felt had I been in Warsaw when he was King. I remembered at that time someone told him I was going to Poland, and he said that he would treat me with the greatest distinction; but all allusion to the past struck me as being painful for him. Stanislas Poniatowski was very noble. His face was full of sweetness and benevolence. He was a most agreeable man in conversation, being well versed in literature. He was so devoted to painting, that when he lived in Warsaw he frequently visited the artists residing in that city. His kindness was unequalled. I remember receiving myself a proof of it, which even now causes me to feel ashamed. Sometimes when I am painting, I seem to lose sight of everybody and everything except my model, which has often caused me to behave in a very rude manner to those who happen to disturb me when at work.

One morning, being engaged in finishing a portrait, the King of Poland came to see me; having heard the sound of several horses at the door I fancied who it might be, but was so absorbed in my work that I felt vexed, so much so indeed, that when he opened my door, I called

out : "I am not at home." The King said not a word, but put on his coat again and departed. As soon as I had quitted my palette, I remembered how I had behaved, and felt so ashamed that I went that same evening to the King of Poland to make my excuses and ask for forgiveness.

"How you greeted me this morning !" said he, as soon as he saw me, and added, "I can quite understand that when one disturbs an artist who is very busy, it is annoying to her, so believe me I do not feel at all annoyed with you." And he made me remain to supper, all my behaviour being forgiven.

I rarely missed the little suppers given by the King of Poland. Lord Whitworth, the English Ambassador at the Russian Court, and the Marquis de Rivière were also very faithful in their attendance. We all three preferred these friendly gatherings to the larger crushes ; for after supper we often had a charming conversation, which the King knew how to enliven by a number of interesting anecdotes.

One evening, after I had been at the palace a short time, I was struck by the singular change which I observed in the looks of our dear Prince ; his left eye appeared to me so dead and lustreless that I felt terrified. On leaving, I said on the stairs to Lord Whitworth and the Marquis de Rivière, whose arm I had taken :

"Do you know that the King causes me great uneasiness?"

"Why," they asked, "he seems in excellent health ; and has been conversing in his usual spirits."

"I have the misfortune to be a good physiognomist,"* I replied, "and I noticed how curious his eyes looked; the King will not live long."

Alas! I had guessed only too correctly; for the next day he was struck down by an attack of apoplexy, and shortly after was interred in the fortress near Catherine. It was with real grief that I heard of this death, a feeling shared by all who had known the King of Poland. Stanislas Poniatowski never married; he had a niece and two nephews. The eldest of these last Princes, Joseph Poniatowski is well known for his military skill and bravery, which have caused him to be surnamed the "Polish Bayard." When I knew him first, he might have been six or seven and twenty. He had very little hair on his forehead, but his face was remarkably handsome. He had shown so much bravery and military knowledge in the last wars against the Turks, that he was unanimously proclaimed chief captain, and I was astonished on seeing him, to think one so young should have gained such a reputation. Everyone vied with their neighbours at St. Petersburg in the pleasure of greeting and fêting him.

During a grand supper that was given him, and to which I was invited, all the women begged him to have his portrait taken by myself; he replied with that modesty which was his chief characteristic:

"I must win several battles before being painted by Madame Le Brun."

* It is seldom that I am deceived in appearances. The last time I saw the Duchesse de Mazarin, who was feeling very well and looking in perfect health, I said to my husband: "The Duchesse will not be alive in a month;" which happened as I had predicted.—(*Author's note.*)

When I next beheld Joseph Poniatowski in Paris, I should not have recognised him, he was so much altered. He wore a frightful wig which made him look quite different. But his renown had so much increased, that he could console himself for the loss of his beauty. He was then preparing to wage war against Germany, under Napoleon, whose faithful ally he had become, in his quality of Pole. His bravery in the campaigns of 1812 and 1813 is well known, as is the mournful incident which put an end to this noble career.

Joseph Poniatowski's brother did not resemble him at all; he was tall, stiff, and cold. I did not see much of him at St. Petersburg; but I recollect his coming one morning to see the portrait of the Comtesse Strogonoff, and occupying himself solely with the frame of the picture. He had a great idea of his knowledge of painting though, and was guided in his judgments by an artist who drew very well, but who was chiefly distinguished by his copying Raffaele's designs, which gave him a supreme contempt for the French school.

Madame Ménichek, the King of Poland's niece, was very kind to me, and it was with pleasure that I met her again in Paris. I painted her daughter's portrait at St. Petersburg, when she was quite a child; and that of her uncle, the King of Poland as well, dressed in the costume of the time of Henri IV. The first portrait I made of that good Prince I kept for myself.*

* This splendid portrait is now the property of M. J. Tripier Le Franc, a nephew by marriage of Madame Vigée Le Brun.



CHAPTER XXIII.

My Reception by the St. Petersburg Academy—My Daughter—Sorrow caused by her Marriage—The Countess Czernicheff—I leave for Moscow.



ONE of the pleasantest memories I have is that of my reception as Member of the St. Petersburg Academy. I was informed by Count Strogonoff, then director, of the day fixed on for my reception. I had ordered for myself the Academy uniform, a riding habit with a little violet waiscoat, yellow petticoat, and black hat and feathers.

At one o'clock I entered a salon preceding a long gallery, at the end of which I distinguished Count Strogonoff, seated at a table. I was asked to go towards him. In order to do so, I had to cross this long gallery filled with spectators, but as, fortunately, I knew many people amongst this crowd I did not feel very nervous. The Count made me a very complimentary little discourse, and then gave me from the Emperor the diploma which made me a Member of the Academy. In the evening, I met several persons who had been present at the spectacle. I was applauded for my courage in crossing the gallery full of people. "I could not have done so," I replied, "had I not known how kindly disposed they all were to me."

I made my own portrait for the Academy of St. Petersburg, and represented myself painting, with my palette in my hand.

I linger on these pleasant episodes in my life, for I long to avoid speaking about the sorrows and worries which troubled my sojourn at St. Petersburg, but I must now enter into some of these sad details.

My daughter was seventeen years old. She was very charming ; her large blue eyes were full of mirth, her nose was slightly *retroussé*, her pretty mouth, beautiful teeth, and fresh complexion formed as lovely a face as one could wish to see. She was not very tall, but slim, without being thin. She had great ease of manner and sprightliness. Her memory was wonderful ; she remembered everything she had learnt in lessons or from reading. She sang delightfully, for at Naples and at St. Petersburg I had given her the best teachers, as well as English and German masters ; but what pleased me most of all was her great aptitude for painting, so that I cannot express how happy and proud I was at her many accomplishments.

I beheld in my daughter the joy of my life and the comfort of my old age, so that it was not surprising that she had her own way in most things. My friends said sometimes that I loved her so devotedly that I obeyed her, but I replied, "Do you not see that she is beloved by all?" In fact she was appreciated by the most distinguished people and much sought after. I was never invited without her, and I enjoyed the successes she obtained in society much more than I had enjoyed my own.

As it was but seldom I could leave my studio in the morning, I had consented to leave my daughter with the Countess Czernicheff sometimes, as she often took her for sleighing parties, which she much enjoyed, and the Countess also made her spend the evening with them when I was absent. There was often to be met there a man called Nigris, the secretary to Count Czernicheff. This man was good-looking and had a nice figure, and appeared about thirty years of age. As for his accomplishments, he drew a little, and his writing was very good. His soft ways and melancholy glances gave him a romantic and interesting appearance, which had such an effect upon my daughter that she fell in love with him. Immediately the Czernicheff family began to lay plans and try to make him my son-in-law. Being informed of what was passing, my sorrow was very great as may well be imagined, and painful it was for me to think of giving my daughter, my only child, to a man with neither talent, fortune, nor family. I made inquiries about Monsieur Nigris. Some spoke well of him, but others spoke ill, so the days passed without my being able to decide on anything.

In vain did I try to persuade my daughter that this marriage would not be a happy one for her under the circumstances. Her head was quite turned, and she would not listen to the dictates of my love and experience. On the other hand, the people who had resolved on my consent employed every means in their power to tear it from me. They told me Monsieur Nigris would run away with my daughter and have a clandestine marriage. I did not

believe it though,* for Monsieur Nigris had no money and the family which protected him were not over-burdened with it either. They threatened me with the Emperor, and I replied, "I shall tell him that a mother's rights are older and better than those of all the Emperors living." The cabal which had formed against me was so sure of making me give way to persecution, that they actually asked me for a wedding portion, as I was supposed to be very rich. I remember that the Neapolitan Ambassador came to see me and ask of me, for this marriage, a sum which exceeded what I was in possession of at the time ; for I had only left France with eighty louis in my pocket, and a portion of my savings since had been taken from me by the Venetian Bank.

I could have borne the malice and slanders of the cabal, but the hardest thing of all was that my daughter seemed to shun me and treated me no longer with any affection. Finally, she became very thin, and fell quite ill. Then I was compelled to give way. I wrote to Monsieur Le Brun, asking him to give his consent. Monsieur Le Brun, in his letters, had often spoken to me of the wish he had to marry our child to Guérin, whose fame as an artist had reached me even then. This project, which would have suited us so well, could no longer be realised. I told Monsieur Le Brun the story, and made him feel that having only this one dear child, we ought to sacrifice all to her wish and happiness.

* He had so little money that he was obliged to ask for a few ducats to give to the church the day of his wedding.—(*Author's note.*)

My letter posted, I had the joy of seeing my daughter regain her health ; but alas ! that joy was the only one she gave me. Her father's answer having taken some time to reach us, owing to the distance, they persuaded her I had only written to prevent his giving his consent to what she called her happiness. This suspicion wounded me deeply ; but I wrote several times and showed her my letters, which she posted herself. Such an act of confidence ought to have undeceived her ; but no, faithful to the mistrust which they never ceased to inspire her with, she said one day : " I bring you your letters, but I feel sure you have written others in a contrary sense." I felt stupefied and broken hearted, when just then the post arrived, bringing M. Le Brun's letter and consent. Without being considered pressing, a mother might have looked for some excuses or thanks ; but such was not the case, and my child never showed the slightest contrition for what she had said, though I had sacrificed to her all my desires and intentions.

The marriage was celebrated a few days later. I gave my daughter a handsome trousseau, besides jewellery ; and one bracelet surrounded by very fine diamonds, on which was her father's portrait, and I placed her marriage portion, the result of my labours at St. Petersburg, in the hands of Livio, the banker.

The day after I went to see my daughter ; I found her very calm and not at all elated by her happiness. A fortnight later, being with her, I said, " Thou art very happy, I hope, now that thou hast really married him ? " M. Nigris, who was talking to some one, had his back to us,

and as he had a bad cold he wore a large overcoat. She replied, "I confess that this fur garment disenchant me ; how can I care for such a figure ?" Thus a fortnight had sufficed for love to fly away.*

As for me, the charm of my life had vanished. I took no longer the same pleasure in my daughter, and yet, God knows how much I loved her still, in spite of her faults. Shortly after her marriage she got small-pox ; I had never had that fearful malady, but nothing could prevent my going to take care of her. I found her face so swelled that I was horrified ; but my fear was solely on her account, and as long as the illness lasted I had no thought for myself. To my joy she recovered without being disfigured in the least. I then decided on leaving St. Petersburg, where I had suffered so much that my health had given way, and on going to Moscow. It was not that the marriage, or even the disgraceful reports it had occasioned, had left any traces. Far from that ; those who had most injured me, repented of their injustice, and Count Czernicheff wrote me a letter begging forgiveness for his wrongs towards me ; but all these repentances came too late—the arrows had gone home, I could not forget the past and I felt miserable. I did not complain ; I kept silent, even with my dearest friends, about my daughter and the man she had chosen for a husband. I did not even tell my brother my grief, though I had often written to him since he had told me of a fresh affliction—for that was a

* I must say that M. Nigris was very kind and had insinuating manners ; they lived very happily for some years.—(*Author's note.*)

mournful period of my existence—and I had lost my mother.

So many sorrows all at once made me ill, and in order to restore my health, I decided on seeing what change of air would do for me ; I hastened to finish my large portrait of the Empress Marie, and I left for Moscow the 15th October in the year 1800





CHAPTER XXIV.

A Bad Road—Moscow—Comtesse Strogonoff—Princess Tufakin—
Maréchale Soltikoff—Prince Alexander Kourakin—Visit to an
Englishwoman—Prince Bezborodko—I return to St. Petersburg.



IT would be difficult, I believe, to undergo greater fatigues than those which awaited me on the way to Moscow. The roads which I had hoped to find frozen were not so ; my carriage kept bumping in and out of the slush, and gave us such fearful jolts that I expected to die at any moment. In order to get a little respite from this torture, I stopped half way and got down at the Inn of Novgorod, (the only one on the route) in which I had been told I should be well cared for and well fed. Being in great need of rest, and half dead with hunger and fatigue, I asked for a room. Barely was I installed in it, than I noticed a most curious smell which nearly made me sick. The master of the inn, when I begged him to give me another room, was unable to do so, so I resigned myself to my fate ; but soon perceiving that this intolerable odour seemed to enter by a glass door which was in the room, I called to the waiter and interrogated him on the subject.

“Ah !” said he quietly, “there is a man behind that

door who died yesterday ; no doubt he is the cause of what Madame complains."

I asked no more questions ; I arose, had the horses harnessed once more, and left, only taking with me a piece of bread for the remainder of the journey to Moscow.

I at last reached this ancient and immense capital. I fancied myself entering Ispahan, of which I had seen several pictures, so different did Moscow seem from any other European city. Therefore I shall not attempt to describe the effect produced on me by its golden domes, broad streets, and superb palaces ; for to have a correct idea of Moscow it ought to be visited.

I descended at the palace kindly placed at my disposal by M. Demidoff. No one inhabited it, so I rejoiced in the thought of perfect quiet. After all my fatigues and privations, my first desire, after having satisfied my appetite, was to sleep ; but alas ! towards five in the morning I was roused by a fearful noise. A band of Russian musicians, each harping on one note, had taken possession of the room next mine for their practice. This room being very spacious was most likely the only one suited to this performance. I took care to ask the *concierge* if that entertainment went on every day, and on his answering me, that the palace being empty the most spacious apartment was devoted to that practice, I resolved on seeking a lodging elsewhere and not interfering with the habits of the house.

I went very quickly to visit Countess Strogonoff, the wife of my good old friend ; I found her perched on a

very high chair that rocked to and fro without ceasing. I could not understand how she managed to endure the continual movement, but she had need of it for her health ; she was unable to walk or help herself at all, which however did not prevent her from being amiable. I told her of my worry about apartments, she at once said she had a pretty house, not inhabited, and begged me to live there ; but as she refused to hear of any payment, I refused most positively. Seeing that it was vain to try and persuade me, she introduced her daughter who was very pretty, and asked me for the portrait of this young lady as an equivalent, which I accepted with pleasure. A few days afterwards I established myself in my new quarters where I hoped to find peace, since at least I should be by myself.

As soon as I was installed in my new abode I began to visit the city, as much at least as the weather would permit me to do ; for during the five months I spent in Moscow the snow never melted, which deprived me of the pleasure of beholding the environs which I believe are very beautiful. One of the usual customs at Moscow, as well as St. Petersburg, was that of vapour baths. There were some for women and men ; only the latter after they have taken their bath, from which they issue red like lobsters, rush out quite naked and even in extreme cold roll themselves in the snow. To this habit are attributed the strength and healthiness of the Russians. Certainly chest and lung diseases, and rheumatism are unknown to them.

I had noticed at St. Petersburg that the aristocracy

seemed to form one family, all the nobles were related to each other ; at Moscow, where the population was much larger and the aristocracy more numerous, society was not so private. For instance, six or seven thousand people could be present in the ball-room, where the highest of the land used to congregate. I went to one of these balls, and was surprised at the large number of pretty girls present. I can say the same of a very fine ball given by the Maréchale Soltikoff. The young women were nearly all beautiful, and wore the antique costume which I had recommended to the notice of the Grand-Duchess Elizabeth for the Empress Catherine's ball. They wore cashmere tunics edged with gold fringe ; splendid diamonds were attached to their short sleeves, and their Greek head-dresses were adorned with narrow bands covered with brilliants. It was impossible for anything to look richer or more elegant than these costumes ; they increased the charms of these lovely women still more, owing to their grace. One of those I admired most, was a young lady who shortly after married the Prince Tufakin. Her features were very fine and regular, but her expression was extremely melancholy. When she was married I began her portrait, but could only finish the head at Moscow, so that I carried the picture away to complete it at St. Petersburg, where I soon heard of the death of the pretty original. She was barely seventeen. I painted her as Iris, with a flowing scarf, seated on clouds.

The Maréchale Soltikoff had one of the nicest houses in Moscow. I paid her a visit on my arrival, and she received me most courteously. Her husband was then

Governor of this city. She asked me to paint the Marshal's portrait and that of his daughter, who had married one of Count Vladimir's sons, so that in about ten days I had already commenced six portraits, when an accident, which nearly cost me my life, deprived me of my studio and delayed the execution of my work.

I enjoyed perfect quiet in the house lent me by the Comtesse Strogonoff ; but as it had not been inhabited for seven years, the cold was intense. I tried to remedy it by heating all the stoves to their utmost extent. This precaution did not prevent my being obliged to leave a fire in my room at night, and I was so frozen, when in bed, that I rolled my head up in my pillow and tied it round with a piece of ribbon at the risk of being stifled.

One night after I had been asleep, I was awoke by an asphyxiating smoke. I had just time to ring for my maid, who persisted in saying she had put out all the fires.

"Open the door," said I, and barely had she done so when the room was filled with thick smoke. We were obliged to break the windows : but as I was ignorant of the cause of this smoke, I felt most uneasy. At last I saw one of the men who had lighted the stoves, and he told me he had forgotten to open the chimney which closes the stoves, which is, I believe, placed outside the house.

Being relieved from the fear of having set fire to the Comtesse Strogonoff's house, I visited my rooms, cold though I was. Near the *salon* where I gave my sittings was a large stove, before which I had placed the portrait of the Maréchale Soltikoff to dry ; it was so baked and

charred that I had to recommence it. But my greatest anxiety was for some paintings by great masters belonging to my husband, which I had left in a room near my sleeping apartment. I knew they would suffer if they were not removed. It was five in the morning. The smoke had barely dispersed, and since we had broken the glass windows, the place was not habitable. What was I to do? I decided on sending over to kind Madame Ducrest de Villeneuve; she came at once and took me back to her house, where I remained for a fortnight, during which time this charming woman treated me with a kindness I shall never forget.

When I thought it time to return to my own home, I went first with M. Ducrest de Villeneuve to see how it looked. Although the window panes had not been replaced, the whole house had such a strong smell of fire smoke, that I should have found it impossible to live there so soon. I felt very perplexed, when Count Grégoire Orloff, with that courtesy, which is really natural to Russians, came and offered me a house belonging to him which was empty at the time. I accepted this offer and established myself in this new abode, where I must say the rain soaked through the roof to such an extent, that Marshal Soltikoff, who came to see me, having expressed a desire to see my paintings which were exposed in one of the rooms, asked me for an umbrella. Notwithstanding this new annoyance, I remained in this house till my departure.

I dined once with a Prince Galitzin, whose charming manners made him generally beloved, although he was too

old to sit at table with his guests who numbered about forty ; the exquisite and abundant repast lasted over three hours, which fatigued me dreadfully, added to which I was placed in front of immense windows and nearly blinded by the glare. This festivity seemed insupportable to me ; but I had some compensation before sitting down, in seeing a very old gallery of paintings by the old masters. Prince Galitzin, whose age and infirmities prevented him leaving his arm-chair, had requested his nephew to do me the honours of it. This young man who did not know much about painting, explained the subjects as well as he could, and I found it difficult to keep from laughing, when, before a picture representing *Psyché*, not being able to pronounce this word, he said :

“ This is *Fiché* ! ”

This long repast at Prince Galitzin's recalls another to my mind which I believe has never finished. I was invited to dine at a banker's, a rich, fat man. We were eighteen at table ; but never did I behold more ugly or insignificant faces ; when I had gazed at them all once, I dared not raise my eyes for fear of seeing them again. There was no conversation, and they might have been taken for wooden figures had they not eaten like ogres. Four hours passed I felt so tired I nearly fainted ; at last I feigned sudden indisposition and left them at table, where most likely they are now.

That was an unlucky day for me ; I now forget for what reason I was obliged to visit an English lady. I was taken to see her by an acquaintance who left me, promising to return and fetch me afterwards. As ill luck would

have it, this English lady did not understand a word of French and I not a word of English, so that we were both in a great predicament. I can see her now, seated before a small table on which were two candlesticks, which lit up her white face. She spoke to me out of politeness in her language which I did not understand, and in return I spoke French which was equally unintelligible to her. We thus remained together for over an hour, which seemed to me more like a century, and I believe the poor Englishwoman found it just as long also.

At the time I lived in Moscow, the richest man there and perhaps in Russia was Prince Bezborodko ; they said he could raise on his estates an army of thirteen thousand men. His numerous palaces were full of slaves, whom he treated with the greatest kindness and had them taught different trades. He was a very talented man ; and was employed in the reigns of Catherine I., and Paul II., first as Secretary to the Cabinet, and then as Secretary of State in 1780. From a desire to escape the numerous petitions which were addressed to him, he did not make himself easy of access ; women sometimes followed him into his carriage when he said in answer to their demands : " I shall forget it ;" and if a petition was in question ; " I shall lose it !"

¶ He possessed a thorough acquaintance with the Russian language and literature, besides a wonderful memory. One well-known story about him will prove the truth of this. He received one day from the Empress Catherine an order to draw out a new Ukase, which he forgot to do, owing to being much engaged. The next time he met the

Empress, she demanded her Ukase. Bezborodko was not at all disconcerted. He drew out a paper from his pocket, and improvised, without the slightest hesitation, the whole project of the law. Catherine was so satisfied with this composition that she took the paper from him, but her astonishment was excessive on finding it a blank page. Bezborodko was about to make many apologies, but she silenced him with compliments, and next day made him her Privy Councillor.

The numerous portraits I had been asked to paint, and the pleasant society I had formed round me at Moscow ought to have kept me for some time in this city, where I only spent five months, six weeks of which were passed in my room. But I was sad and ill, I needed rest and a milder climate, so I resolved to return to St. Petersburg, see my daughter, and leave Russia. Soon after, I announced my intended departure and said my adieux. Everything was done to retain me, but without avail. Many people, I now fancy, were cognisant of the coming Revolution, and they implored me to delay my journey for a few days, saying they would go with me to St. Petersburg; but, being totally ignorant of the plot, I persisted in starting, which was foolish of me, for by waiting a little, I should have avoided the fatigues I underwent on the fearful roads, rendered nearly impassable by the thaw.



CHAPTER XXV.

Death of Paul I.—Joy of the Russians—Details of the Assassination
—The Emperor Alexander I.—I paint his portrait and that of the
Empress Elizabeth—I leave Russia.



ON the 12th of March, 1801, halfway between Moscow and Saint Petersburg, I learned the death of Paul I. I saw before the post-house numbers of couriers, who were going to spread the news through the Empire, and as they took all the horses, I was unable to procure any for myself. I was compelled to remain in my carriage by the road-side all night. There was an icy wind and I was nearly frozen. At last I procured some horses and did not arrive at St. Petersburg till eight or nine o'clock the following day.

I found the city in transports of delight; people were singing and dancing in the streets. Many of my acquaintances rushed to my carriage and shook my hands, saying, "What a deliverance!" The evening before the houses were illuminated. In fact, the death of this unfortunate prince was a most joyful event for the public.

All the details of this tragedy were well known, and I can assert that the accounts I received that day were consistent one with the other. Palhen, one of the conspirators, did his utmost to terrify Paul about a plot arranged

by the Empress and her children, he said, to possess the throne. Paul's usual mistrust made him lend a too ready ear to these false reports, and they irritated him so much that he ended by commanding the perfidious Minister to conduct his wife and children to the fortress. Palhen refused to do so unless he had an order signed by the Emperor ; and Palhen immediately took it to Alexander and showed it to him. " You see," said he, " that your father is mad, and you are all lost unless you prevent his doing further harm by shutting him up." Alexander, who saw that his liberty and that of his household was menaced, only gave, by his silence, a tacit consent to this project, which consisted in making a maniac powerless to do further evil ; but Palhen and his accomplices thought necessary to do even more than that.

Five conspirators were chosen for the execution of the deed, and one of them was Platon Zouboff, Catherine's former favourite, whom Paul had covered with honours after recalling him from exile. All five entered Paul's room ; he was in bed. The two guards placed at the door defended the entrance most courageously, so that one was killed ; * but they resisted to no purpose. At the sight of these furious men, Paul arose. As he was very strong, he struggled for some time against his assassins, who at last strangled him in his arm-chair. The wretched man cried out, " You, too, Zouboff ! you whom I thought a friend ! " and with these words he expired.

* The Empress Marie took the other into her service.—(*Author's Note.*)

It seemed as though fate had so arranged the circumstances of this plot as to favour it entirely. A regiment had been chosen to defend the palace, and, far from the colonel being in the confidence of the conspirators, this officer was convinced he had to guard against a plot which would take place against the Emperor's life. A portion of the regiment went into the garden, and were placed under Paul's window, but neither the noise made by the soldiers awoke him nor that of some rooks that usually roosted on the roof, and that croaked violently. Had it been otherwise, the unfortunate Prince might have had time to reach a secret staircase near his room, by which he could have entered the apartment of Madame Narischkin, in whom he had every confidence. Once there, he might have escaped down the canal by a little boat. Moreover, the distrust he had of his wife had caused him to double-lock the doors which separated his rooms from those of the Empress. When he tried this door, it was too late. The assassins had taken the key. Koutaisoff, his faithful valet, received that very day a letter warning him of the plot ; but this man, whose love for Madame Chevalier and jealousy of the Emperor had rendered him quite idiotic, neglected most of his duties, and did not even open his letters to read their contents. He left on his table the one containing the revelation of the conspiracy, and when he opened it the next day, the miserable man nearly died of despair. It was the same with the colonel who had taken his regiment to the palace. This young man, Talaisin by name, when he was told of the crime which had been committed, felt so annoyed at being out-

witted, that he was seized with a violent fever and became dangerously ill. I believe that he did not long survive his remorse, innocent though he was ; but what I know for a fact is, that the Emperor Alexander I. went to see him every day whilst he was ill, and forbade the rifle practice which took place near the sick man's house.

Notwithstanding the obstacles of which I have spoken against the committal of the crime, it is to be believed that the authors of the deed had no doubt as to the result ; for it was well known in St. Petersburg that a young man called S——ky, one of the conspirators, pulled out his watch towards midnight, and said in the midst of several people :

“ It must be all over now ! ”

Paul was then dead, his body was embalmed and exposed for six weeks on a state bed, the face uncovered and very little decomposed, for they had put on rouge. The Empress Marie, his widow, went every day and knelt and prayed before this funeral couch ; she had her youngest sons with her, Nicholas and Michael, who were of such tender years that the former asked her once :

“ Why papa was always asleep ? ”

The ruse which was employed to make Alexander I. consent to his father's dethronement, for he never entertained another thought, is a fact which I know from Count Strogonoff, one of the most truthful of men, and who knew more than anyone else what passed at the Russian Court ; he was aware of the ease with which Paul must have been made to sign the order for the imprisonment of the Empress and her children, for he knew the fearful suspi-

cions with which this wretched Prince was tormented. The day of the murder there was in the evening a grand Court concert, at which all the Royal family were present. Once, when the Emperor was talking apart to Count Strogonoff, he said :

“ You think, no doubt, that I am one of the happiest of mortals ? I live in this Palace of St. Michel which I built myself, and I have decorated it to my own taste. I have assembled around me for the first time my whole family ; my wife is still beautiful, my eldest son is also very handsome, my daughters are charming ; there they are all before me, well, when I look at them I see in them my assassins.” Count Strogonoff drew back horrified.

“ You are deceived, Sire, it is an atrocious calumny.”

Paul fixed his haggard eyes on him, and squeezing his hand, said :

“ What I say to you is the truth.”

The miserable monarch was haunted by the thought of his death. Count Strogonoff also told me that, the day before, Paul had said to him in the morning, on looking into the glass and seeing his mouth was on one side :

“ When that happens to a man, dear Count, it is time for him to prepare for his journey.”

I firmly believe that Alexander was not aware of the attempt on his father's life ; nothing could make me believe the contrary ; there was nothing to prove it at that time, and the knowledge I had of this Prince's character gave me the assurance of his innocence. Alexander I. was very noble and generous, he was always of a religious disposition, and was so frank by nature, that he never

made use of astuteness or deceit, even in his policy ; and on learning that Paul was no more, his grief was so great that none of those about him doubted of his innocence in this murder. At first he refused to reign ; and Elizabeth, his wife, threw herself on her knees to implore him to become Emperor. He then went to the Empress, his mother, who called out :

“Away ! away ! I see you covered with your father’s blood.”

Alexander raised his eyes to heaven, and said from the depths of his heart :

“I take God to witness, my mother, that I did not order this fearful crime.”

Such an accent of truth was in these few words that the Empress consented to listen to him. When she learnt how the conspirators had deceived her son as to the result of their enterprise, she threw herself at his feet, saying, “I salute thee, my Emperor.” Alexander raised her, and kneeling before her, clasped her in his arms, and paid her every mark of love and respect.

This love never wavered. As long as he lived, the Emperor Alexander refused his mother nothing ; and he had such a great respect for her that she never missed the honours of her Court ; she generally walked before the Empress Elizabeth.

Paul’s death gave rise to none of those reactions which follow too often the death of a sovereign. All those who had enjoyed the favour of that Prince preserved the advantages they owed to his protection ; Koutaisoff, his valet, the barber whom he had so much enriched and

decorated with some of the first Russian orders, remained quietly in possession of his master's beneficence. Madame Chevalier, the pretty actress who had played the part of favourite, remained at the St. Petersburg theatre ; but as she had received from Paul a magnificent crown diamond, which was well known in the Castle, several Court personages, fearing no doubt that she would quit the city on learning of Paul's death, resorted to her house on the night of the crime ; Madame Chevalier was in bed and asleep, she was roused, and her terror was great on perceiving at such an hour several people in her room ; these gentlemen reassured her, and made her restore the diamond which was of enormous value.

If nothing was changed in the position of Paul's friends, it was otherwise with that of his victims ; the exiles returned and recovered their possessions ; justice was done to all those who had been sacrificed to numerous caprices, in fact a golden age began for Russia. The enthusiasm was so great that the highest happiness for all was to see and to meet Alexander ; if he went to walk in the evening in the summer gardens, if he crossed the street, the crowd encircled him and blessed him, and he, the most affable of princes, received with perfect grace the homage of which he was the object. I could not go to Moscow for his coronation ; but many who were present at the ceremony told me nothing could be more touching or finer ; when Alexander placed the diamond crown on the Empress Elizabeth's beautiful head, they formed such an admirable group that the enthusiasm reached its height.

In the midst of this general rejoicing I had myself the

pleasure of meeting the Emperor on one of the quays of the Neva, soon after my arrival. He was on horseback ; although Paul's law was abolished, as may be imagined, I had stopped my carriage so as to have the chance of watching Alexander pass by ; he came up to me at once, and asked me how I had liked Moscow, and if I had not found the roads very bad, besides several other flattering remarks.

The next day Count Strogonoff came to me from the Emperor, asking me to make a portrait of his bust and one on horseback as well. Barely had this news spread abroad, than I was besieged by people asking me for copies, either of the one on horseback or the bust ; it did not matter which, so long as they had Alexander's portrait. At any other period of my existence this circumstance would have been the making of my fortune ; but alas ! my bodily health, not to mention the mental worries with which I was still tormented, would not permit me to profit by it. Not feeling well enough to commence the full length portrait, I drew in pastels the busts of the Emperor and Empress, as they would aid me afterwards in making larger portraits at Dresden or Berlin, if I should be compelled to leave St. Petersburg ; in fact I became very ill, and my doctor told me I ought to drink the Carlsbad waters for my complaint. As soon as I had decided on my departure, I begged an audience of the Empress, which was at once accorded, and I went to see her, the Emperor also being present. I told their Majesties how deeply and sincerely I regretted that my health obliged me to leave to go to Carlsbad, whereupon the Emperor replied most cordi-

ally : " Do not go. You seek a remedy which is a long way off ; I will give you the Empress's horse, and when you have had a few rides, you will be quite well again." I thanked him a hundred times for this offer, but confessed I did not know how to ride. " Well," said he, " I will give you a groom to conduct you !" I felt inexpressibly touched by such great kindness, and when I took my leave of their Majesties I could not find terms sufficient to express my gratitude.

Neither these two Sovereigns, or the people who showed such a flattering interest in me during my stay at St. Petersburg and at my departure, ever knew with what grief I left that city. When I passed the Russian frontier, I burst into tears, and made up my mind to revisit those who had for so long shown me every mark of friendliness and affection ; but it was my destiny, or fate, never to see again the land which I still consider as my second country.





CHAPTER XXVI.

Narva—Berlin—M. Ranspach—The Queen of Prussia—Her Family
—The Peacock's Island—General Bournonville.



QUITTED St. Petersburg feeling ill and sad.

I was alone in my carriage, for I had been obliged to part with my maid, a Russian, so I took with me only a very old man who wished to go to Prussia, and whom out of pity I had engaged as a domestic, a circumstance I speedily repented of, for this man got so drunk at every post-house that he had to be carried back to his seat. M. de Rivière, who accompanied me in his carriage, was not of much assistance, especially after we had passed the Russian frontier and reached the sandy districts; for his postillions would insist on taking him along all the by-roads whilst I followed the grand route.

My first stoppage was at Narva, an ugly and badly paved little town, very well fortified; the women wore antique costumes and were handsome—as a rule Livonians are very good looking; nearly all the old men reminded me of Raffaele's pictures, and the younger ones, with their flowing hair, might have stood for models to that great master.

The day after my arrival I visited a splendid water-fall at some distance from the town ; whilst I was gazing at this beautiful spectacle, several of the inhabitants of Narva who had been watching me drawing told me of a fearful scene which they had witnessed.

The waters of the cascades having overflowed, owing to the heavy rains, washed away some of the land on one side with a house containing a large family. They could hear the shrieks of these unfortunates and watch their despair without being able to succour them, as no boat could cross the torrent, and at last a more horrible sight followed when the house and all its inmates disappeared into the gulf before the eyes of those who told me the tale.

I reached Riga afterwards ; this town was neither pretty nor well paved, but was very commercial and had a fine port. Most of the men were dressed either as Turks or Poles, and all the women not belonging to the lower orders wore, when out of doors, a black gauze veil on their heads. I had no time to make other observations, for I was in a hurry to reach Mittau where I hoped to find the royal family ; but I had the disappointment of arriving too late and not seeing them, so that my stay in that town was of short duration.

The state of my health and mind had such a great influence on the surrounding objects, that I remembered more than once with what pleasure I had traversed, in going to St. Petersburg, the road I was passing so sadly then. In those days Courland had enchanted me, the magnificent oak forests, lakes and lovely hills and valleys had been

peopled in my happy imagination with thousands of smiling and poetical ideas. But on my return all was changed, my sadness and sufferings destroyed it entirely, and I barely glanced at the beautiful scenery.

At Königsberg I took the regular postal conveyance to Berlin, which I reached towards the end of July, 1801, at ten in the evening, but notwithstanding my need of repose I had to undergo the torments of the custom-house. They made me stop in a dark vaulted room for over two hours ; the customs officials wished to keep my carriage and inspect it that night, which would have obliged me to walk in a drenching rain to the inn. They would not even allow me to take out my night-cap and some medicine bottles, but finally I obtained permission to leave the place in my carriage, and I drove to the hotel *Ville de Paris*, with one of the officials, a regular demon, who was quite drunk all the time. He untied my parcels, and tumbled everything upside down, carrying off a piece of Indian muslin which had been given me by Madame du Barri, when I left Paris. The next day I sent early for M. Ranspach, my banker, who settled all my grievances ; and made them restore me my piece of muslin without having anything to pay, and the head of the custom-house made me many apologies for what had happened. M. Ranspach was most kind, I dined with him some days later and met several of his compatriots, who combined with much learning the merit of not being pedantic, and whose conversation interested me extremely.

Three days sufficed to restore me from my fatigues, and I felt much better, when the Queen of Prussia, who was not

at Berlin, had the goodness to ask me to visit her at Potsdam, where she wished me to take her portrait.

I left ; but here my pen is powerless to describe the impression made on me by this Princess. The charm of her lovely face with its fine and regular features ; her beautiful figure, neck, and arms, and the dazzling whiteness of her complexion, everything about her surpassed my expectations. She was clad in deep mourning, with a head-dress of wheat-ears in black jet, which added still more to the brilliancy of her skin. She decided on the day for her first sitting.

"I cannot give you one before twelve," she said, "for the King reviews his troops every day at ten and likes me to be present."

She offered me an apartment in the castle, but knowing that in accepting it I should inconvenience one of her ladies, I thanked her, and lodged in a furnished hotel where I was very uncomfortable.

My sojourn at Potsdam was very enjoyable. The more I saw of this charming Queen the more pleasure I felt in approaching her. She expressed a desire to see the studies I had made of the Emperor Alexander and the Empress Elizabeth, and was much satisfied with them ; she was so amiable and kind that the attachment I felt for her amounted almost to love.

I take pleasure in recalling all the marks of gracious attention which Her Majesty was pleased to show me, even in small matters : for example, I had coffee every morning in my hotel which was always detestable ; I happened somehow to mention this to the Queen, who sent me some

excellent coffee the next day. Another time I was admiring her bracelets which were of an antique design, she immediately took them off and put them on my arms ; this gift affected me more than a fortune would have done, and these bracelets have travelled with me ever since.

During one of my sittings the Queen had her children brought in for me to see ; to my great surprise they were quite ugly : on showing them to me, she said :

“They are not handsome.”

I confess I had not the face to deny the fact ; I contented myself with saying that they were very characteristic looking.*

I had often spoken to the Queen about my love for the country ; she wished me to see her Isle of Peacocks. One of her carriages took me over. This charming retreat is reached by a road through a thick pine forest, then it descends a steep hill which takes you to a lake, on which is situated the Island of Peacocks, with its little castle ; it was dull rainy weather, but I was enchanted with this spot.

Besides the two studies in pastels ordered by Her Majesty, I did in the same way those of Prince Ferdinand's family.† One of the young Princesses, Princess Louise, who married Prince Radzivill, was pretty and very agreeable ; her husband was an excellent musician. I remember

* These children improved afterwards. The Princess, who became Empress of Russia, in particular.—(*Author's Note.*)

† I copied all these pastels in oils later, shortly after my arrival in Paris.

one day he caused me a great surprise, solely owing to the different customs of the country : during my stay at Berlin I was taken to a large public concert, and I was astonished on entering the room to see Prince Radzivill playing on a harp. Such a thing could never take place in my country, an amateur, and above all a Prince, can never play before any but his own circle of friends ; but in Prussia it seemed quite natural.

It was in Berlin that I made the acquaintance with the Baronne de Krudener, well known for her wit and eccentricity. Her reputation as an author was already made ; but she had not assumed the character of a religious enthusiast which caused her to be so celebrated in the north ; she and her husband were very kind to me. I can say the same of Madame de Souza, the Portuguese ambassadress, whose portrait I painted. I encountered many of my acquaintances besides ; amongst others, I met with pleasure Count and Countess Golovin whom I had known in St. Petersburg. Madame Chevalier, the charming actress, also came to Berlin. She was very rich, and I heard that after being divorced she had married a young man attached to the French Legation.

On my arrival in Berlin I had paid a visit to General Bournonville, the French Ambassador, for I entertained a great desire to return to Paris. My friends and my brother, in particular, were anxious for me to do so ; it had been easy for them to get me struck off the list of *émigrés*, and I was re-established in my quality of French woman, to which in spite of all I still clung in my heart.

General Bournonville was a brave and honest soldier,

much esteemed at Berlin ; he received me very kindly, and advised me to go back to my country, assuring me that peace and order were completely re-established.

Although General Bournonville was the first Republican Ambassador I had visited, I had met others before, towards the end of my stay in St. Petersburg. General Duroc and Monsieur de Chateau-Giron had reached Alexander's Court, being sent by Bonaparte ; and I remember, being at the time with the Empress Elizabeth, hearing them say to the Emperor, "When shall we receive the citoyens ?" Monsieur de Chateau-Giron paid me a visit. I received him as well as I could, but I cannot describe the effect made on me by the tri-coloured cocade. A few days later, they dined with the Princess Galitzin Beauris. I was seated near General Duroc, who, I was told, was an intimate friend of Bonaparte. He never spoke a word to me, and I did the same by him.

The dinner of which I am writing gave rise to an amusing incident. The Princess's cook, being in complete ignorance of the French Revolution, naturally thought these gentlemen were the Ambassadors of the King of France. Wishing to do them every honour, he thought over several things, and, remembering that the Fleur-de-lis were the French arms, he hastened to make everything, the truffles, cutlets, and patties, all in that design. This surprise alarmed the guests so much, that the Princess, fearful of being accused of a somewhat doubtful joke, ordered the head-cook to come up-stairs, and asked him the reason of this shower of fleurs-de-lis. The worthy man replied, in a very pleased manner, "I wished your Excellency to see

that I knew what ought to be done on great occasions." A very witty woman whispered to me : "What a misfortune that the cooks and scullions ever knew any more than he does !"

A few days before my departure from Berlin, the Director of the Academy of Painting came most courteously and brought me himself the diploma of my reception by this Academy.

All the many kindnesses I received at the Prussian Court ought to have prolonged my stay, and would have done so, had not my plans been quite decided on. I took leave of the charming and beautiful young Queen. I did not think that very few years after I should have the sorrow of hearing she was dead. I did not imagine that an infamous calumny would be added to the losses by war, which would lead her to the tomb in the flower of her youth !

I never read the bulletins issued by Napoleon's army in those days without feeling overcome with indignation. I remember meeting at that time in Paris, in the Opera, when I was with the Comtesse Potocka, a Pole, who came from the French Army. I asked him about the shameful lies which were spread about concerning the *liaison* of the Prussian Queen with the Emperor Alexander. The young man replied : "Nothing could be more false ; it is all invented to enliven the bulletins."

And yet the poor woman, the victim of these reports, read these calumnies, and the sorrow they occasioned her, added to other griefs, hastened her death most probably.



CHAPTER XXVII.

I leave Berlin—Dresden—Letter to my Brother—Frankfort—The Divoff Family—I return to France.



FEARED on leaving Berlin that I had lost all my possessions in the following manner :—I had ordered my horses for five o'clock in the morning. My servant had, apparently, gone to say good-bye to some of his friends, and was nowhere to be found, and in Prussia the horses never wait. I had risen, still stupefied with sleep, and the servant of the hotel, not seeing my own man about, took possession of my dressing-case to send down with the rest of my luggage. This dressing-case, which contained my diamonds, my money—all my fortune, in fact—was always placed under my feet when I travelled. By the greatest good-luck, as soon as I was seated in the carriage, I perceived, though still half asleep, that my feet were not supported as usual. The horses started. I cried out to stop them, and asked for my dressing-case from the hotel servant, taking care to speak loudly enough to arouse the mistress of the house. This succeeded, for after some evasive replies from the man, my dressing-case was brought me. It was discovered in a stable at the back and covered with hay. This cir-

cumstance had given time for my servant to arrive, and I left, very happy, as may be supposed, to have recovered at the same time both my servant and dressing-case. I mention this adventure, as I think it may serve as a lesson to travellers.

On leaving Berlin, I went to Dresden, where I was compelled to remain, in order to make several copies of the portrait of the Emperor Alexander which I had promised. I intended afterwards to continue my journey to France, without stopping any length of time on the road. The following letter, which I wrote when at Dresden to my brother, will give some idea of what I felt at the time :—

“ Dresden, September 18th, 1801.

“ It is ages, my good friend, since I wrote to you, but I have always been on the move, without finding a nice corner where I could settle myself a little comfortably, and commence making copies of the portrait of the Emperor Alexander. I received your note by good Père Rivière. The longing you have to see me is only equal to my own, but, my dear friend, I cannot conceal from you the dread I feel in returning to Paris. The remembrance of the horrors that have passed there is so vividly before my eyes, that I fear to revisit the places which have been witness of such frightful scenes. I should wish to have been blind or to have drunk of the waters of oblivion, in order to live on that blood-stained soil.

“ On the other hand, when I think of the happiness it will be to embrace you again, to meet old friends who are still left to me, I no longer hesitate, and I say to myself

that I will return. Yes, my friend, I shall go to meet you all again ; but, alas ! I shall not meet our poor mother. That sorrow is the deepest of all others. You will take me to see her grave. . . . My God ! how sad are my thoughts !

“Since leaving Russia, I have been invited to visit Vienna, Brunswick, Munich, and London, without speaking of St. Petersburg, who clamours to have me back again. I have been received in the most flattering manner at all places. Everywhere I have found a country, with this difference, that calumny has not torn me to pieces, as in France. You know what that viper has made me suffer ! All my persecutors are still there ; suppose I should again fall into their envenomed clutches !

“I will ask you to send me an itinerary of my journey, and, above all, say if I shall be allowed to come and go as I like, for, after passing the winter with you, I should wish to make another journey. Travelling and change of air agree with me. To live in a city would kill me.

“I found the beautiful and amiable Princesse Dolgorouki here. Monsieur Demidoff also, who seems heartily tired of this place. He said to me the other day, ‘What a dismal city this Dresden is ! I have done my best, but cannot find out how to spend a thousand crowns a day.’

“Kind Monsieur Laya will take this letter to you. I made his acquaintance here, and he pleased me at once. He is a distinguished man of letters, and the most good-natured person in the world. Knowing him to be a friend of your’s prepossessed me in his favour ; and the more I know of him, the greater is my regard. I should much

like to know Monsieur Legouv  , of whom you speak. His writings have made me like him, and I hope you will introduce him to me on my arrival.

“Adieu ! My best love to yourself and Suzette, without forgetting my little niece, whom I love as a daughter. Remember me to good Madame Verdun. How pleased I shall be to see her again, as also Robert M  nageot, the Brongniart family, &c. These are my subjects of consolation, and they are very necessary. Adieu !”

My resolution once formed of returning to France for the winter, I hastened my work, so as to be able to spend a few days with the Riv  re family at Brunswick. I met whilst with them the Duc de Brunswick, who desired my acquaintance. I was presented to him, and he at once expressed a wish that I should make his portrait. As my time was so limited, I was compelled to decline, with much regret, as this Prince was very handsome. After staying five or six days with Monsieur de Riv  re’s relations, I started on my journey alone, my travelling companion remaining with his family.

I remained one night at Weimar, and the day which preceded it, was full of tribulations. I had hoped to have reached Weimar about noon, and had therefore taken no precautions as regarded my dinner, but unfortunately I had a driver who did not know the road, and who instead of taking a good one, lost himself and me in rich pasture lands where we passed the whole day. By nightfall I was almost dead with hunger and fatigue. The horses, worn out, could no longer draw the carriage which was very heavy, and to complete my trouble my servant was suffer-

ing from a whitlow on his finger, which prevented him from helping us. I remember that in the endeavour to allay my impatience and above all my appetite, I amused myself by trying to model a face out of some of the horrid soil in which we were stuck, and succeeded fairly well in doing so. We at last, and with difficulty, got out of this tiresome position, and reached Weimar at midnight, so worn out and bewildered that all along the road I had given at the toll bars two ducats instead of two grutz.* I only found out my mistake at the door of the hotel, on paying the last post, and I sent back for my two last ducats which were returned to me.

I had been travelling since eleven o'clock in the morning, without having eaten anything, and had to wait a long while before getting into the hotel, as every one goes to bed at an early hour at Weimar, and no one was up.

I had several letters of introduction from the Court of Vienna ; but I was so tired and ill, and was so uncomfortable at the hotel, that I left on the following morning. At Gotha, which was my next halting place, I found the Baron de Grimm, whom I had known previously in Paris ; he was most obliging and kind to me, and arranged my money matters, which the change of country necessitated.

At Frankfort I put up at a fine hotel, which bore the name of France and Paris. I had left my drunken old servant at Berlin, as he had been such a trouble to me, and when I got out of my carriage, a very well dressed young German, who was standing at the door, offered to carry

* A ducat is worth twelve francs, and a grutz worth two sous.

my dressing case upstairs for me. He placed it on the table in the room I was to occupy, and as naturally I had followed him, he wanted to kiss my hand, which I refused as politely as I could, at the same time thanking him for his attentions. I locked the door after him, for the face of the young man displeased me, and made me suspect him.

A few minutes afterwards, I heard a carriage stop before the hotel. I went to the window, and saw my good friend Madame Divoff, her husband and son, whom I had known so well at St. Petersburg, descend. I ran to welcome this excellent family, and there again was the young German helping the servants to carry their luggage into their rooms. So much zeal appeared suspicious to my mind ; but Madame Divoff, grateful for his attention, invited the young man to sup with us. At table, he told us his misfortunes relative to a love match which had been broken off. It was quite a romance, and I was so strongly persuaded that he had invented it, that I could not feel the least interested in it, though Madame Divoff was so overcome as to shed tears. The following morning, she invited the young romancer to breakfast, which I did not at all approve of. We were obliged to remain six days at Frankfort, which was very annoying ; but a false report was circulated that Bonaparte had been assassinated, and in such a case, all my plans for returning to Paris would have been changed. At last, when we were on the point of starting, several silver dishes belonging to Madame Divoff were missing. I never for a moment doubted they had been stolen by the young German, and immediately

after my arrival at Paris, I read in the newspapers that the young man had been arrested for theft.

I will not attempt to describe the state of my feelings on again touching, after twelve years, French soil ; the terror, the sorrow, and the joy which agitated my mind in turn. I wept for friends who had died on the scaffold ; but I was going to see others who still remained to me. This France into which I was entering had been the theatre of atrocious crimes ; but this France was my country !





CHAPTER XXVIII.

I arrive in Paris—Concert in the Rue Cléry—Ball at Madame Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély—Madame Bonaparte—Vien—Gérard—Madame Récamier—Madame Tallien—Ducis—My Soirées—I leave for London.



ON my arrival at my house in Paris, in the Rue du Gros-Chenet, M. Le Brun, my brother, his wife and daughter, were waiting at the entrance door to receive me, weeping for joy at seeing me again, and I also was much overcome. I found the staircase filled with flowers, and my own rooms charmingly arranged. The hangings and window curtains of my bedroom were in green cashmere, the curtains being edged with gold-coloured embroidery. M. Le Brun had placed a crown of gold stars as an ornament for the head of my bed; all the furniture was in good taste, and I found myself very comfortably installed. Though M. Le Brun made me pay very dearly for all this luxury, I was not the less sensible of the trouble he had taken to make my house agreeable to me.

The house in the Rue du Gros-Chenet was separated by a garden from a house which looked into the Rue de Cléry, and which also belonged to M. Le Brun. In this house was an immense reception room in which first rate

concerts were held. They took me to one on the night of my arrival, and as soon as I entered the room, everyone turned towards me, the audience clapping their hands. I was so surprised by this flattering reception that I burst into tears. I remember that Madame Tallien was present at this concert, radiant with beauty.

The first visit I received the following morning, was that of Greuze, whom I did not find changed. I was touched by his friendliness, and was very glad to see him again. After Greuze, came my good friend Madame de Bonneuil, as pretty as ever; for the way this charming woman carried her age was quite astonishing. She told me that her daughter, Madame Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély was giving a ball on the following day, and that I must positively go to it.

"But," I replied, "I have no handsome dress to wear," and then I showed her the famous piece of embroidered India muslin which had travelled about with me so much, and had run so many risks since the time Madame du Barri had given it me. Madame de Bonneuil thought it very beautiful, and sent it to Madame Germain, the celebrated dressmaker, who made me at once a fashionable dress, and sent it in time for the ball.

I met there the most beautiful women of the period, at the head of whom I must place Madame Regnault herself, then Madame Visconti, so remarkable for the beauty of her figure and face. Whilst I was engaged in looking at all these charming women, a lady who was seated in front of me, turned round, and I could not help saying:

"Ah! Madame, how lovely you are!"

This lady was Madame Jouberto, then very poor, and who has since married Lucien Bonaparte.

There were present at this ball, many French Generals ; Macdonald, Marmont, and several others ; in fact it was a new world to me.

A few days after my arrival, Madame Bonaparte came one morning to see me ; she brought to my recollection the balls we had been to together before the revolution, and which I had quite forgotten ; but I was very grateful for her kindness. She invited me to breakfast with the First Consul.

Ménageot soon called ; he had been Director of the Academy of French Painters in Rome, and related to me his reason for leaving Rome, in the revolt of the students. He also told me how he had seen Bonaparte at Lodi, after his great victory. Bonaparte, on showing him the field of battle still strewn with dead, said to him with the greatest sang-froid :

“ This would make a fine picture.”

Ménageot was indignant with this remark. “ It was,” he said, “ a frightful, heart-breaking sight ; there were several dogs who were howling over the corpses of their masters ; these poor animals were much more humane than Bonaparte ! ”

I was greatly touched at the joy expressed by my friends and acquaintances at seeing me again, though my pleasure was sadly troubled at hearing of so many deaths, of which I was ignorant ; for there was scarcely anyone who called who had not lost either a mother, husband, or some relative. I had one very disagreeable visit to pay, and

which vexed me more than any other : this was to my odious step-father ; he lived at Neuilly in a small house which had been bought by my father, and where I had spent many of my youthful days. Everything in this place recalled my poor mother, and the happy time I passed with her ; I found there her work-basket just as she had left it ; it was a sad and mournful visit.

One can imagine with what delight I visited the Museum of the Louvre, which possessed so many splendid works of art ; I went there alone, so that I might enjoy it without anything to distract me. I first visited the pictures, then the statues ; and when after having remained several hours standing, I began to think of returning home for my dinner, I perceived that the guardians had locked up the doors and gone away. I ran right and left ; I cried ; it was impossible to make myself heard ; I was dying of cold and hunger, for it was in the month of February. I could not knock at the windows, they were much too high up ; thus I found myself in prison with all these fine statues, which I no longer was in any disposition to admire. They appeared like so many phantoms, and the idea that I should have to pass the night with them, filled me with terror and despair. At last I discovered a little door, at which I knocked so loudly that some one heard me and opened it ; I ran out precipitately, delighted to regain my liberty.

Shortly after my arrival in Paris, I received the following letter from the Comédie Française :

“Madame,

“The Comédie Française has done me the honour to request me to forward you a copy of the decree just passed, for placing your name on the list of free entries for that theatre ; you are requested to accept this homage as a mark of admiration and esteem for your rare talents.

“I have the honour, &c.

“MAIGNIEU, *Secretary.*”

On my first visit to the theatre the general aspect appeared very dull ; accustomed as I had been in former years in France, and also in foreign countries, to see everyone wearing powder, the black heads and black coats of the men formed a gloomy *coup-d'œil*. One might have concluded that the public were assembled to follow a funeral procession.

The appearance of Paris also did not appear so gay ; the streets seemed narrower. This was caused, no doubt, by my recent visit to St. Petersburg and Berlin, where the streets are wide and spacious. But what displeased me more than anything else, was to see written on the walls : *liberté, fraternité, ou la mort*. These words raised in my mind many sad reflections on the past, and filled me with fears for the future.

I was taken to see a grand parade held by the First Consul on the Place du Louvre. I was stationed at a window of the Museum, and I remember that I could not be made to recognise as Bonaparte, the little slight man who was pointed out to me as him. The Duc de Grillon, who was by my side, had all the trouble in the world to

make me believe it. As in the case of the Empress Catherine II. I had imagined this celebrated man to be a sort of colossus. Shortly after my arrival, Bonaparte's brothers came to see my paintings ; they were very amiable, and said many flattering things to me ; Lucien, in particular, was greatly struck by my Sybil, and praised it highly.

My first visits were to my kind old friends, the Marquise de Grollier and Madame de Verdun, also to the Comtesse d'Andelau, a most charming woman : her two daughters, Madame de Rosambo, and Madame de Orglande were worthy of their mother by their beauty and intelligence.

I also called on the Comtesse de Ségur, whom I found alone and very sad ; her husband had as yet no appointment, and they were badly off. Later on, when Bonaparte became Emperor, he made the Comte de Ségur master of the ceremonies, which relieved them at once of their difficulties. One evening, at about eight o'clock, I went to see the Comtesse, and finding her quite alone, she said : " You will hardly believe that I have had twenty people to dinner ? they all left after the coffee." I was much surprised ; for before the Revolution, the greater number of guests who had dined with her finished the evening at her house, which I thought a much better arrangement than the present fashion.

Madame de Ségur invited me to a grand musical soirée, where were gathered together all the most notable people of the day. I remarked another innovation, which I thought was equally bad. I was astonished on entering

to see all the men on one side and all the women on the other; you might have supposed they were enemies in view of each other. Not a man came to our side, with the exception of the master of the house, the Comte de Ségur, whose ancient habit of courtesy made him say a few flattering things to the ladies. As soon as the beautiful Madame de Canisy arrived, we lost our only cavalier; the Comte at once devoting all his attentions to this beauty, to whom at this time I am informed the Emperor was paying his court.

I found myself seated by the side of Madame de Bassano, whom I had heard much praised, and whom I had greatly desired to see. She appeared to pay great attention to the diamond bracelet given me by the Queen of Naples on my taking leave of her. This was in fact very handsome. As I suppose she considered me a nobody, not being the wife of a minister or belonging to the Court, she did not vouchsafe me a word, which did not prevent my looking at her often, and thinking her very pretty.

The first artist on whom I called was M. Vien, who had been appointed in the old times as first painter to the King, and whom Bonaparte had made a senator. I was greatly pleased with the reception he gave me, and for his extreme kindness. He was then eighty-two years of age, nevertheless, he showed me two sketches composed in the style of the antique bacchanals which he had just painted. They were charming.

After this visit I called on M. Gérard, already so celebrated by his pictures of Belisarius, and of Psyche. I had the greatest desire to become acquainted with this splendid

artist, whose quality of mind equalled his rare talent. I found him worthy of his fame. He had just finished painting the fine portrait of Madame Bonaparte, mother of the Emperor Napoleon I.; she is depicted reclining on a sofa, and this picture added still more to his reputation.

The portrait of Madame Bonaparte gave me the wish to see the one Gérard had made of Madame Récamier; accordingly I called on this lovely woman, charmed by a circumstance which procured me the pleasure of seeing and making acquaintance with her.

Shortly after this, she invited me to a grand ball, to which I went with the Princesse Dolgorouki, whom I had the happiness of seeing in Paris. This ball was charming; nothing was wanting, numbers of people without any crowding, many beautiful women, and a handsome house. As the peace of Amiens had just been declared, I met at this *réunion* a certain air of magnificence that the rising generation had not hitherto known. It was the first time that men and women of twenty saw liveries amongst the servants in the ante-chambers of Ambassadors; foreigners of rank, richly dressed and decorated with brilliant orders; and whatever may be said, this display was more suitable at a ball than the carmagnole and breeches of the Revolutionary period.

Madame Récamier had only one woman in Paris who rivalled her in beauty. This was Madame Tallien.*

* The Baron Gérard made a fine portrait of Madame Thérèse Cabarrus, wife of Devin de Fontenay, afterwards wife of Tallien, and later wife of Comte Caraman, Prince de Chimay.

Robert, who knew her well, took me to see her, and I must own that I sought in vain for a defect in the whole appearance of this charming person. She was both beautiful and pretty, for the regularity of her features did not detract from her expression. She had an enchanting smile, and was admirably proportioned.

Madame Tallien combined with her beauty a noble disposition. It is well known that during the Revolution a number of victims, doomed to death, owed their lives to the empire she exercised over Tallien. These unfortunate people named her *Notre Dame de Bon Secours*. She received me in the most graceful manner. Later, when she had married the Prince de Chimay, she lived at the end of the Rue de Babylone in a handsome house, where she and her husband often amused themselves by private theatricals. Both of them acted well. She invited me to one of these entertainments, and came several times to my *soirées*.

I was not long in Paris before I made several new acquaintances, who in time became friends. I had the happiness of being a near neighbour of the Marquise d'Hautpoul, who, by her character and amiable disposition, soon made me love her. I also became acquainted with Madame de Bawr, who had recently married a Russian officer, son of a celebrated General of that name. She was very young, and had not as yet distinguished herself in a literary capacity, as she afterwards did, on losing her husband and her fortune.

I had the happiness at this period of meeting Ducis, whose noble character equalled his rare talent. The ex-

treme simplicity of his manners contrasted so well with the brilliant imagination with which he was endowed, that I have never known a more interesting man than the excellent Ducis. His friends had but one regret, and that was that it was impossible to keep him in Paris. He hated towns, and the country, with its fields and shepherds, was necessary to the author of "Cædipus" and "Othello."

The solitary life which it pleased him to lead was the cause of a great surprise and even fear to myself, and I have never forgotten it. On my return from London I went to see him at Versailles, where I heard he had settled. It was evening. I knocked at his door, and Madame Peyre, the widow of the architect, whom I had believed dead some years, opened it to me, holding a candle in her hand. I cried out with fright, and gazed at her in a terrified manner, whilst she told me that she had quite recently married Ducis. She took me to her husband, whom I found seated in a small room, surrounded by books and manuscripts.

I had great pleasure in again meeting Madame Campan. She held a high position in the Bonaparte family, and invited me to dine with her one day at Saint-Germain, where she had established her school. I found myself at table with Madame Murat, the sister of Napoleon, but we were placed in such a manner that I could only see her profile, as she did not turn her face towards me. I judged, however, that she was pretty. In the evening, the young school-girls performed "Esther," and Mademoiselle Auguë, who since married Marshal Ney, acted the principal part very well. Bonaparte was present during the perform-

ance. He was seated in the front row ; I placed myself in the second in a corner a little distance from him, so that I might examine him at my leisure.

I remarked with pleasure in Madame Campan's room a bust of Marie-Antoinette. I told her how pleased I was to see it there, and she said Bonaparte approved of it, which I thought was nice of him. It is true that at this period he seemed to fear neither the past nor the future. His victories excited the enthusiasm of the French, and even that of foreigners. He had many admirers amongst the English, and I recollect once, when dining at the Duchess of Gordon's, she showed me the portrait of Bonaparte, saying, "Voilà mon zéro !" As she spoke French very badly, I understood what she wished to say, and we laughed heartily when I explained what a *zéro* was.

The great number of foreigners of my acquaintance who were at this period in Paris, and the necessity I felt to try and drive away the melancholy which I could not overcome, induced me to give *soirées*. As the Princesse Dolgorouki was very anxious to become acquainted with the Abbé Delille, I invited him to supper with me, at the same time asking several other persons worthy of listening to him. Though this charming poet had become blind, he had lost none of the amiable gaiety of his character. He recited several of his finest verses, which enchanted us all.

After this supper, I gave several others. I collected at one of them all the principal artists of the period, and we were as gay as before the Revolution. At dessert each person was obliged to sing a song. Gérard chose the air of "Marlborough," but, to tell the truth, his singing was

not as perfect as his painting, for he sang false, and we laughed at him.

On another occasion, I arranged a supper for all the great personages of the time and the Ambassadors, amongst whom was Monsieur de Metternich. Then I gave a ball, at which Madame de Hamelin, Monsieur de Trenis, and others danced, for it was then the fashion to dance as well at private parties as at the Opera. Madame Hamelin was considered the best dancer in Paris. I remember that at this ball Madame Demidoff danced what was called the Russian valse in such an elegant manner, that people stood up on the benches to see her.

I was anxious, by these parties, to return in some measure to the Russians and Germans, who were in Paris, some of the pleasures they had procured for me whilst staying in their country. I saw nearly every day the Princess Dolgorouki, who had been so kind to me at St. Petersburg. She liked Paris, and soon formed a pleasant society around her. I remember at one of her soirées meeting the Vicomte de Ségur, whom I had known before the revolution. He was then young and elegant, making a thousand conquests by the charm of his face. On seeing him again at the Princess's with withered face, wrinkled, and wearing a wig with symmetrical curls on each side, leaving the forehead bare, I said to myself :

“ Alas ! what are we coming to ? ”

The Princesse Dolgorouki came to see me the day she had been presented to Bonaparte. I asked her what she thought of the Court of the First Consul.

“ It is not a court,” she replied, “ but a power.”

It must have appeared as such to her, accustomed as she was to the Court of St. Petersburg, which was numerous and brilliant, whilst at the Tuileries, she would see very few women, but a prodigious number of military of all ranks.

In the midst of the distractions which a residence in Paris offered me, I was not the less haunted by the most gloomy thoughts, which I could by no means get rid of. I felt an ardent desire to live alone, and took a small house at Meudon, which had once been occupied by nuns. It was situated in the wood, and its rustic and solitary aspect made me fancy myself a thousand miles from Paris. This suited me admirably ; for my melancholy was so great that I could not endure seeing anyone ; whenever I heard a carriage I fled into the woods of Meudon.

The first visits I received there were those of the Duchesse de Fleury and Madame de Bellegarde, who lived together in a house in the environs. They invited me to go and see them, and were so amiable that they at last reconciled me to humanity, and succeeded in dissipating my melancholy. In the autumn I returned to Paris, where all my gloomy ideas speedily came back. To put a stop to such a state of mind I resolved on taking a journey, and never having visited London, decided on going there.





CHAPTER XXIX.

London—The Route—West—Reynolds—Mrs. Siddons—Mrs. Billington—Madame Grassini—Duchess of Devonshire—Sir Francis Burdett.



LEFT for London on the 15th of April, 1802.

I did not know a word of English. I had provided myself with an English maid, but was soon obliged to get rid of her, as she was very inefficient, and spent the greater part of each day in eating slices of bread and butter. Happily I brought with me a charming young person as a companion and friend. This was my good Adelaide,* whose constant care and counsel have been so useful to me.

On landing at Dover, I was rather alarmed at seeing the population assembled on the shore ; but became reassured on being told that the crowd was composed of the inhabitants who invariably came to see the passengers land. The sun was setting, and I at once engaged a carriage with three horses, and started without delay ; for I was not without some anxiety, as I had been informed I might possibly meet highwaymen on the road. I had taken the

* Mademoiselle Adelaide married afterwards M. Constant, Madame Vigée Le Brun's man of business.

precaution of putting my diamonds inside my stockings, and I was very glad I had done so, on perceiving two men on horseback galloping towards us who, to complete my terror, separated, as I thought with the intention of placing themselves at each side of the carriage-door. I shook with fright ; but nothing occurred.

I took up my abode on arriving in London at the Hotel Brunet, in Leicester Square. I was dreadfully tired, and had great need of sleep ; but I found it impossible, as all night long I heard some one talking and stamping up and down over my head. The cause of this insupportable noise was explained to me the following day. I met on the stairs M. de Parseval de Grandmaison, whom I had been intimately acquainted with in Paris, and was delighted to see him. When he told me he was lodged above me, I at once begged him not to walk about all night, and not to choose that time for reciting his verses, seeing that his voice was so strong and sonorous that it penetrated even to my room. He at once agreed, and from that time I slept tranquilly.

As I had no intention of remaining in the hotel I was then staying at, I profited by the kindness of one of my compatriots, named Charmilly, who came to see me and took me to look at other apartments. I took one in Beck Street, and this reminds me that, on my arrival in London, my ignorance of the English language made me make an amusing mistake. Accustomed as I had been to read "Rue de Richelieu," "Rue de Cléry," etc., the word "Street" written at the end, appeared to me to be the name, and I said to my servant :

“ Here is a street that seems to have no end.”

The lodgings which I had taken in Beck Street were so inconvenient, that I could not remain there. First, at the back of the house I looked into the barracks of the Royal Guard, and every morning, between three and four o'clock, I heard a trumpet sounding so loud and out of tune, that it was sufficient to wake the dead. To this noise was added that of the horses of the Guard, whose stables were under my windows, and they prevented my sleeping at night. In the day time I had the noise of my neighbour's children, who were continually running up and down stairs. Their mother having heard that I exhibited my pictures, brought all her numerous family to see them. She made me think of Madame Gigogne, who had so many children she didn't know what to do. I might, it is true, have taken refuge in a room that was more agreeably situated ; but knowing that a lady had recently died there, I had a great repugnance to occupying it. The arms of the deceased were still over the street door ; I did not understand this custom, otherwise I should have taken the house. I therefore left Beck Street, and established myself in a fine house in Portman Square. This large square made me hope for a little tranquillity. Before taking it, I had well inspected the back of the house, and the view from the windows betokened complete calm. I slept on that side in consequence. But the following morning, at daybreak, I heard the most piercing cries. I rose, put my head out of the window, and perceived an enormous bird belonging to my nearest neighbour. I had never seen anything like it before. It looked furious ; its beak and

tail were of monstrous length ; and I can positively assert that a large eagle, in comparison with it, would have had the appearance of a small canary. I was informed that the horrible creature came from the East Indies. But wheresoever its origin, I did not hesitate to write and ask its mistress to remove it to the other side of the street. This lady replied that she had had it placed there first, but the police had ordered its removal, as it alarmed the passers-by.

Not being able to get rid of the bird, I should perhaps have got accustomed to the nuisance ; but the house had been inhabited previously to my taking it by some Indian Ambassadors, and I was told that these people had buried two of their slaves in my cellar, where they still remained. What with corpses and birds, it was really too much, so I left Portman Square, and established myself in Maddox Street, in an apartment which was frightfully damp, which did not however prevent my remaining there, as I was tired of such constant moving.

Great and beautiful as London is, it offers less resources for an artist than Paris or the Italian cities. It is not that England does not possess many precious works of art, but the greater number are the property of private individuals, who make them the ornament of their town or country houses. At the time of which I speak, London did not possess any museum of pictures, that which exists at the present time being the fruit of legacies and presents made to the nation within the last few years. For want of pictures, I went to see the monuments. I returned several times to Westminster Abbey, where the tombs of the

Kings and Queens are superb. I admired, amongst others that of Mary Stuart, in which the remains of that unfortunate Queen were placed by her son, James I. I stayed a long while in that part of the Abbey consecrated to the great poets, Milton, Shakespeare, Pope, Chatterton. It is well known that the last-named, dying of want, poisoned himself, and I could not help thinking that the money employed on raising his tomb would have sufficed to have procured him a comfortable existence.

St. Paul's Cathedral is also very fine. It is an imitation of the cupola of St. Peter's, at Rome.

I saw at the Tower of London a very curious collection of armour of different centuries. Amongst it was a series of figures of sovereigns on horseback, one of the most remarkable being Elizabeth, ready to review her troops.

The British Museum possesses a collection of minerals, arms and utensils belonging to the savages of the South Sea, and brought to England by the celebrated Captain Cook.

The streets of London are finely proportioned and clean. The large pavements made them very commodious for foot-passengers; also I was much surprised to find myself a witness of scenes that civilization would appear to proscribe. It was no means rare to see "boxers" fighting in the streets, and covered with blood. Far from this disgusting spectacle appearing to shock the lookers-on, I noticed that they stimulated the combatants by giving them glasses of gin. It was a frightful sight.

The Sundays in London are as dull as the climate. No shops open, no theatres, no balls, or concerts. A general

silence reigns everywhere, and, as on this day no one can work or play any instrument without running the risk of their windows being broken by the people; you have no other resource for passing the time but the public walks, which are much frequented.

The grand amusements of the best society are parties, which are called "routs." Two or three hundred people walk up and down in the drawing-rooms, the women arm-in-arm with each other, for the men keep themselves apart. In this crowd one is pressed and knocked about continually, so that one becomes dreadfully fatigued; nevertheless there are no seats! At one of these routs I met an Englishman, whom I had known in Italy. He came up to me, and amid the profound silence which always reigns in these assemblies, said, "Are not these parties very amusing?" "You find your amusement in what we should call dulness," I replied. I could not see, in fact, what pleasure there could be in stifling oneself in a crowd which is too great for you to be able to get near the mistress of the house.

The walks in London are not at all gay; the women all walk together on one side dressed in white. Their silence, their perfect calm might make one fancy they were shadows passing along. The men keep themselves apart from them, and maintain the same serious appearance. I have sometimes met a man and woman walking together arm-in-arm. When I have happened to walk near such a pair, I have amused myself by watching if they spoke to each other. I never heard them utter a word.

The first artist I visited in London was Mr. West, a renowned historical painter; I saw at his house many

pictures that he had not quite finished, the composition of which appeared very fine.

I visited nearly all the principal artists, and was extremely surprised to see with all of them a quantity of portraits of which the head alone was finished. I asked them why they sent portraits in this condition to be exhibited; they all replied, that the persons who had sat for them were contented to be seen and named; and besides, the sketch once made, half the price was paid in advance, and the painter was satisfied.

I saw, whilst in London, many of Sir Joshua Reynolds' famous pictures; they are a most excellent colour, and remind one of Titian, but in general are unfinished with the exception of the head. I admired an Infant Samuel of his, which charmed me both for its finish and colour. Reynolds was as modest as he was clever; when my portrait of M. de Calonne arrived at the London custom-house, he went to see it, and this is what I have been told by persons who heard him. When the case was opened he gazed at it for some little time, and inspected it, whereupon some spectator who repeated the idle words of calumny, said:

"This portrait ought to be good, for Madame Le Brun received £3,200 for it."

"Well," replied Reynolds, "if they gave me £4,000 for it, I could not have done it as well."

The London climate greatly worried this artist, as it is so unfavourable for drying the paint, and he had tried mixing wax with his paints, but this he found deadened them.

When going to a painter's house in England to see his pictures, it is the custom to pay a certain sum before entering the studio, and in general it is the painter himself who benefits by the money given to the servants. My domestic was the only one who profited by it ; this good fellow gave me all his savings to keep for him, and at last I had sixty guineas, which he had received from people who came to see my pictures. The celebrated Fox came several times, and paid the customary fee on each occasion ; I was very sorry never to have been at home to receive him, for I had a great desire to see this great politician. I was more fortunate with Mrs. Siddons, whose visit I did not lose ; I had seen this celebrated actress for the first time in the "Gambler," and I cannot express the gratification I experienced. I do not believe it possible for anyone to possess greater talent than Mrs. Siddons for the stage ; all the English were unanimous in praising her perfect and natural style. The tone of her voice was enchanting ; that of Mademoiselle Mars alone at all resembling it, and what constituted to my mind the great tragedian, was her very silence, so admirable in expression.

Happily the day on which I received Mrs. Siddons was not one of those when I did not expect visitors, and in consequence I was not caught in one of my fits of abstraction, which were often laughable. Here is an instance : I only received on Sunday mornings the people who came to see my paintings ; the other days, I was constantly painting in my studio, in a very careless costume ; but two English ladies who were leaving that week, having begged me to receive them before their departure, I fixed Thurs-

day. The day came, and whilst waiting for them, began to paint ; my good Adelaide hearing that I expected ladies who dressed elegantly, told me that I must not be seen in my painting dress, spotted all over with colour, and with a night-cap on my head. I consented, and in consequence put on under my smock-frock a charming white dress, and Adelaide brought me my pretty little *wig à l'antique*, as worn at that time, recommending me that as soon as I heard a knock at the street-door to take off my night-cap and smock, and to put on my wig. Occupied by my work, I heard no knock ; but heard the ladies coming up the stairs. I quickly seized my wig and popped it on over my night-cap, and I quite forgot to take off my smock. I noticed at once that the English ladies looked at me in a curious manner, without my being able to imagine the reason ; at last, after they had left, Adelaide came in, and seeing me attired in this fashion, she was quite angry, and said :

“Just go and look at yourself in the glass !”

I then perceived that the frill of my cap came out from under my wig, and that I had kept on my smock ; Adelaide was furious, and she was right, for these ladies must have thought me crazy, and I hope that what I have just written may one day come under their notice.

Though my rooms in Maddox Street were decidedly damp, they were large and convenient for receptions, so that I was able to give many grand *soirées* ; one amongst others which was very brilliant, where the two best singers of the London opera, Mrs. Billington and Madame Grisini, sang two duets together with rare perfection ; Viotti

played the violin and charmed everyone. The Prince of Wales, who was present at my concert, said to me most graciously :

“I take a passing look at all the *soirées*, but, here, I remain.”

I presented Madame Grassini to all the great ladies I had invited ; for she was much sought after in London, which was very natural, seeing that she joined to her beauty and talent a most amiable disposition ; her voice was low, called a contralto, which is very rare and greatly esteemed in Italy, whilst Mrs. Billington’s was a soprano ; but each of them sometimes encroached on the domain of her rival, which was not an advantage to either. I remember one day being present at an opera in which both Mrs. Billington and Madame Grassini sang, and that the latter sang some very high notes. The director came into my box, and said in a furious manner :

“You see what is happening ; well ! it does not astonish me, for when I went this morning to see these ladies, I found Mrs. Billington singing her part in the bass, and Madame Grassini in the treble ; this is what enrages me.”

Concerts were very fashionable in London, and I much preferred them to the *routs*, though these to a foreigner offered the best means of meeting the highest classes of society. Invitations are not sent by letter as in France ; only a card on which is written : *at home on such a day*.

Lady Hertford, who was a very handsome woman, gave superb *routs*. I frequently met Lady Monck with her two daughters at Lady Hertford’s ; also Lord Barrington, who was a great lover of art, and whose conversation delighted

me, also many others who soon formed an agreeable society for me, notwithstanding all that may be said of the reserve of the English as a rule.

The most admired woman in London at this period was the Duchess of Devonshire. I had often heard of her beauty and of her great influence in political affairs, and when I called on her she received me most kindly. She was about forty-five years of age. Her features were very regular ; but I was not struck with her beauty. She had too high a colour, and had lost the sight of one eye. As at this time it was the fashion to wear the hair low on the forehead, she concealed this eye under a mass of curls. The Duchess of Devonshire was of medium height, and not too stout for her age ; her easy manners were extremely gracious.

I went again to her house for a public concert and *rout*. It is the custom of the English aristocracy to lend their reception rooms for purposes of this kind, reserving one or two rooms for their own friends and acquaintances. I was of this number, and whilst sitting near the Duchess she made me notice a man seated a good way from, but facing us, and said to me :

“ Has he not a remarkably intellectual and distinguished appearance ? ”

This was Sir Francis Burdett, whose election as a Member of Parliament she had so greatly helped to gain. I shall never forget the terror his triumph caused me, on meeting one day in the street a coach full of people both outside and in, all yelling : “ Sir Francis Burdett ! Sir Francis Burdett ! ” The greater number of these people

were drunk, and were throwing stones at the windows in the street. As I was perfectly ignorant of the meaning of such a scene, I was greatly alarmed, thinking that a revolution had broken out in England. I quickly returned to my own house, where I was happy to find Prince Bariatinsky, who had lived a long while in London, and fancying I might be uneasy, had called to reassure me. He told me that this sort of thing always took place at the time of any important election, and that by the following day, it would be quiet.

The Duchess of Devonshire had used all her influence for the election of Fox to Parliament, and succeeded at a time when it appeared almost hopeless. Never myself mixing in politics, I could not understand how this great lady, who was at the head of the popular party, was also so intimate with the Prince of Wales. In fact she sometimes lectured him. On one occasion at a *roué* where they were both present, I reproached the Prince of Wales for having failed to keep his appointment for a sitting : the Duchess appeared much pleased at my frankness, and said :

“You are right, princes ought never to break their word.”

I heard in France, in 1808, of the death of the Duchess of Devonshire, who left three children ; a son, the present Duke, and two daughters ; one married Lord Granville, now English Ambassador to France, and the other married Lord Morpeth.



CHAPTER XXX.

The Prince of Wales—I take his Portrait—Mrs. Fitzherbert—My Letter to an English Painter—M. le Comte d'Artois—The Comtesse de Polastron—The Duc de Berri.



SHORTLY after my arrival in London, the Treaty of Amiens having been broken, all the French who had not lived in England over a year were obliged to leave at once. The Prince of Wales, to whom I had been presented, assured me that I should not be included in this order, and that he would immediately obtain the King's consent to my remaining. This permission was at once given me, with all the necessary details, mentioning that *I might travel wherever I pleased throughout the Kingdom*. This was a favour that the French who had lived years in England could rarely obtain. The Prince of Wales completed his act of courtesy by bringing me the order himself.

The Prince of Wales must have been at this period about forty years of age, but he looked older, as he was already too stout. Tall and well-made, he had a fine face ; all his features were noble and regular. He wore a wig, arranged with much skill, the hair being divided in front like that of the Apollo Belvedere, and which suited him admirably. He was fond of athletic exercises ; he

spoke French well and easily. He had a most elegant appearance, and he was magnificent to prodigality in his tastes; his debts were so enormous that at last his father and Parliament ended by paying them.

As he was for a long while one of the handsomest men in the three Kingdoms, he also became the idol of women. His first mistress was Mrs. Robinson, then, later on, he had a more serious engagement with Mrs. Fitzherbert, a widow, older than himself, but very beautiful. His love was so violent that at one time it was feared he would marry this woman, who was the daughter of one of the first Catholic families in Ireland. His inconstant nature saved him from this danger, and since then many women have succeeded Mrs. Fitzherbert.

It was shortly before my departure that I took the portrait of the Prince of Wales. It was nearly full length and in uniform. Many of the English painters were furious against me, when they heard I had commenced this picture, and that the Prince gave me as long as I liked to finish it. I knew that the Queen had said her son paid court to me, and that he frequently breakfasted at my house. She told an untruth, for the Prince of Wales never came to my house in the morning except for a sitting.

As soon as his portrait was finished, he gave it to his friend, Mrs. Fitzherbert. She had it arranged in a frame on wheels (the same as large toilette-glasses), so as to be able to move it into whatever room she occupied.

The ill-temper of the English painters did not confine itself to mere words. A Mr. M——, a portrait painter, published a pamphlet, in which he treated French paint-

ing in general with much bitterness, and mine in particular. Some parts were so unfair and ridiculous that, putting aside my own wounded feelings, I felt obliged to take upon myself the defence of the celebrated painters whose countrywoman I was, and I wrote this gentleman a severe letter on the subject. This letter, which I read to several of my friends, was soon the topic of conversation in London society.

I met many of my countrymen in England whom I had known years ago, amongst others, the Comte de Mé-nard, the Baron de Roll, the Duc de Sérant, the Duc de Rivière, and a number of other French *émigrés*, whom I invited to my *soirées*. I had the happiness of meeting Monsieur le Comte d'Artois. I met him at a party at Lady Percival's, who entertained many foreigners. He was much stouter than when I had last seen him, and looked very handsome. Shortly afterwards he did me the honour to visit my studio. I was absent, and only returned at the moment he was leaving my house, but he had the goodness to return, in order to compliment me on the portrait of the Prince of Wales, which pleased him extremely.

Monsieur le Comte d'Artois did not go much into society. Having very small means, he saved all he possibly could to help the more necessitous French who were *émigrés* like himself. The goodness of his heart made him sacrifice his own pleasures, in order to benefit others. I knew this for a fact, by an incident which it is a pleasure for me to relate. A very interesting young person, named Mérel, who played beautifully on the harp, had come to London in the hope of gaining her living. She

announced a concert. I assisted her, as far as I was able, to get rid of her tickets ; but, in spite of all my efforts, there were so few people present, and it was so terribly cold, I was obliged to leave before the end of the concert. I mentioned Mademoiselle Mérel's misfortune to the Comte de Vaudreuil, and he mentioned it to the Prince. "Is she French?" asked the Comte d'Artois, and receiving a reply to that effect by Monsieur de Vaudreuil, he charged him at once to give ten guineas to the young artist.

Monsieur le Comte d'Artois never left his old friend the Comtesse de Polastron, who was only an invalid, and unable to leave her house. The Prince's solicitude for her was so great that he divined all her wants, and was her most assiduous nurse.

Besides her ill-health, Madame de Polastron had the misfortune to lose her only son, who died of yellow fever at Gibraltar. She died shortly afterwards, and Monsieur le Comte d'Artois remained inconsolable.

The son of this Prince, M. le Duc de Berri, often came to visit me in the morning. He came sometimes carrying under his arm small pictures that he had purchased at a very low price. What proves him to have been a thorough connoisseur in painting, was that these pictures were superb Wouvermans : but it required a very skilled eye to appreciate their merit under the dirt which covered them. I have since seen these pictures at his house in the Palace of the Elysée-Bourbon.

The Duc de Berri was also passionately fond of music. He had a noble disposition, and an excellent heart ; I could relate many traits of his kindness to his inferiors,

kindness which has made him beloved by all who knew him.

I was at the theatre in London when the news arrived of the assassination of the Duc d'Enghien. At once all the ladies who filled the boxes rose to leave, and the piece would not have been finished, if a report had not been spread that the news was false. Everyone reseated themselves ; but, on leaving the theatre, alas, all was confirmed. We heard also some of the details of this atrocious crime, which will always leave a horrible stain on the life of Bonaparte.

The following day we went to the funeral mass which was celebrated for the repose of the soul of this noble victim. All the French, our Princes included, and a great many English ladies were present. The Abbe de Bouvant preached a most touching sermon on the subject. The sermon concluded by an invocation to the All Powerful that a similar destiny should not be the fate of our dear Princes. Alas ! this prayer was not heard, since we have seen the Duc de Berri fall under the poniard of an infamous assassin.

It was some time after the death of the Duc d'Enghien before I again saw his unfortunate father, the Duc de Bourbon, and when about a month afterwards he came to see me, sorrow had changed him to such an extent that he quite frightened me. He could not speak for some time on entering, but seated himself, and clasping his hands over his face, which was wet with tears said : "No, I shall never get over it !"

It would be impossible to describe how much I felt for him in this terrible sorrow.



CHAPTER XXXI.

The Chinnery Family—Viotti—Windsor—Hampton Court—Herschel—Bath—The Duchess of Dorset—Madame de Vaudreuil—M. le Duc d'Orleans—M. le Duc de Montpensier—The Margravine of Anspach—Stowe—Warwick.



THOUGH the kind reception shown me had induced me to remain nearly three years in London, when I had originally intended to stay only three months, the climate of this city did not suit me, and I seized every opportunity of inhaling the pure air at the beautiful country-seats of England, where besides I saw the sun. Soon after my arrival, I commenced by passing a fortnight with Mrs. Chinnery at Gillwell, where I met the celebrated Viotti. The house was most elegant, and I was received most cordially. The entrance door was ornamented with garlands of flowers. The staircase was decorated in the same manner; in short it was like fairyland. On my entry into the drawing-room, two little angels, Mrs. Chinnery's son and daughter, sang a charming little song that the amiable Viotti had composed for me. I was quite touched by such an affectionate reception; and the fortnight passed at Gillwell I have always remembered as one of joy and happiness. Mrs. Chinnery was a very lovely woman, with

a highly cultivated mind. Her daughter, then fourteen years of age, exhibited a surprising talent for the piano, so that every evening, this young girl, Viotti and Mrs. Chinnery, who was herself a good musician, afforded us most charming concerts.

I recollect that Mrs. Chinnery's son though still quite a child, had a veritable passion for reading. They could not induce him to leave his books. At the age of eighteen this young man had already acquired so much notice for his talents, that at the Restoration he was deputed to regulate the accounts of the expenses occasioned by the stay of the English Army in France.

I frequently made excursions in the environs of London, and employed in this manner all the time I could give to my pleasures.

At Windsor, where the King resided, I only admired the park, which is very fine. The King frequently walked with his two daughters on a magnificent terrace, where there is a superb and extended view.

Hampton Court is another royal residence where I saw some splendid painted windows, superior to any I had ever seen before. There were also some fine pictures and grand cartoons designed by Raffaele, that I could not sufficiently admire.

I went with Prince Bariatinsky and several other Russians to visit Doctor Herschel. This celebrated astronomer lived quietly at some distance from London. His sister, who never left him, aided him in his astronomical researches, and both of them were worthy of each other, as much for their learning, as for their noble simplicity.

We saw there a telescope of such enormous dimensions, that one might almost have been able to walk inside it.

The Doctor received us with the most obliging cordiality ; he had the kindness to show us the sun through brown glasses ; and in the evening we saw the planet which he had discovered and which bore his name ; we also saw a large map of the moon on which was represented the mountains, ravines, and rivers, which make this planet resemble the globe which we inhabit ; we were all delighted by our visit.

I cannot speak of the environs of London, without mentioning several beautiful places where the English go to take the waters.

Matlock, for instance, reminded me of Swiss scenery. The public walk is bordered on one side by fine rocks, covered with flowering shrubs, and on the other by grassy swards. The vegetation in England is perfectly beautiful, and presents a delicious prospect to lovers of nature.

Tunbridge Wells is another very picturesque watering place, and it is certainly true that though one can be well amused in the mornings walking about the lovely environs, yet the evenings are very dull, notwithstanding that parties are of constant occurrence. At these assemblies, "God save the King," is invariably played after supper, which always affected me greatly, as I could not help drawing comparisons on the different state of public feeling in England and in France.

Brighton, which is the residence of the Prince of Wales, is even more renowned for its waters than Tunbridge Wells, or Matlock. It is a very fine town, and faces Dieppe.

I also visited Bath, which place had been always pointed out to me as the gayest in England, and I copy a letter I wrote to my brother on my return to London, from visiting it.

“London, February 12th, 1803.

“I have not written to you for some weeks, my dear good friend ; do not be angry with me, for the days are so short, and I write so little. The evenings, on the contrary, are very long, and if writing by candle light did not fatigue my eyes too much, I could send you volumes.

“I see you are uneasy on my account as to how I endure the fogs, and the smoke of coal fires ; to this last I am now quite accustomed—I even prefer it to our own ; but to the dense heavy atmosphere which surrounds me, I shall never get reconciled. However, five or six miles out of London, you find a totally different climate, and I get away as often as possible in order to inhale it.

“I have just returned from Bath, a place I had often desired to see. It is a superb town, and beautifully situated. It is the most fashionable resort in England. There is no end to the balls, concerts, and routs, which are held in the public rooms, which are capable of holding five or six hundred people. At one of the concerts, I heard Madame Krumoltz who played exquisitely on the harp. After the concert, we had supper in a large room filled with long and very narrow tables, reminding one of a refectory. I was with Madame de Beaurepaire, and we seated ourselves by the side of two old and very ugly Englishwomen. I soon discovered they were of the number of those who never quit their native town, and

were, in consequence, very stiff and haughty in their demeanour. As a rule, the great ladies of London, and Englishwomen who have travelled, are amiable and polite, whilst our neighbours, as soon as they were seated, turned their back on us with a very scornful air. We resigned ourselves to endure the disdain of these old women, when an Englishman of their acquaintance came up and whispered a few words to them, when they immediately turned round, and seemed at once disposed to become polite.

"I remained three weeks at Bath, and did not find it either gay or amusing. It rained nearly the whole of the time I was there. Write to me soon. Adieu, my dear friend."

Shortly before my visit to Bath, I spent some days at Knowles, which, after having once belonged to Queen Elizabeth, was now in possession of the Duchess of Dorset. In front of the hall door are two large elm trees which are said to be over a thousand years old. The park is extremely picturesque.

The Castle contains many fine pictures, the furniture is of the time of Elizabeth. In the Duchess's bed-room the curtains are all strewn with gold and silver stars and the toilette apparatus is in solid silver.

The Duchess of Dorset, who was very rich, had married Mr. Wilfort, whom I had known as English Ambassador at St. Petersburg. This gentleman possessed no fortune of his own, but he was very handsome, and had a noble and dignified appearance.

The first time we sat down to dinner, the Duchess said

to me, "You will find it very dull, for we never speak at table." I reassured her on this point, as I was accustomed to dining alone. She certainly kept this rule most rigorously, for at dessert, her son, between eleven and twelve years of age, spoke a few words to her, when she sent him away, without the smallest mark of tenderness. I could not help thinking on what I had heard of English mothers—that, in general, they took little notice of their children when they were no longer quite small, and that they only care for babies.

I again met in London the amiable Comte de Vaudreuil. He was looking much changed and very thin. All that he had gone through in France had shaken his constitution. He had married his niece whilst in England, and I went to see her at Twickenham, where she resided. Madame la Comtesse de Vaudreuil was young and pretty. She had large blue eyes, and a charming, fresh face. She invited me to spend a few days with her, at Twickenham, which I did, and during that time took the portrait of her two sons.

Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans (afterwards Louis Phillipe, King of the French), with his two brothers, lived quite near them. The Comte de Vaudreuil took me to call on the Duc d'Orléans, who had been very kind to him. We found this Prince, whose delight was in study, seated at a long table, covered with books, one of which was open before him. Whilst we were with him, he made me notice a landscape painted by his brother, the Duc de Montpensier, with whom I also made acquaintance during my stay at Madame de Vaudreuil's. I only saw the younger

Prince, the Duc de Beaujolais, out walking. He was good-looking and very lively.

The Duc de Montpensier came sometimes to take me out sketching with him. He took me to see the superb view from the terrace at Richmond. He also showed me the trunk of the tree under which Milton sat when composing his "Paradise Lost." The environs of Twickenham are very interesting, and the Duc de Montpensier knew their beauties so well that I congratulated myself on having him for a *cicerone*, and all the more that this young Prince was extremely kind and good.

I had promised to take the portrait of the Margravine of Anspach, who came to invite me to pass some days with her at her country-seat. As I had been told that the Margravine was a very eccentric woman, who would never leave me quiet for a moment, who would wake me up at five o'clock every morning, with a thousand other insupportable things, I only accepted her invitation after making certain conditions. I, first of all, asked for a bed-room where I should hear no noise, as I liked sleeping late. I also told her that I liked to walk alone. The excellent woman consented to everything, and religiously kept her word, to such a point that if by chance I met her in her park, where she often worked like a common labourer, she would not appear to see me, and would let me pass without saying one word.

Whether the Margravine of Anspach had been calumniated, or whether she had the goodness to restrain herself for me, I must own that during the whole of my visit I was perfectly happy, so that when she asked me to pay

her a visit at another of her country residences, named Benheim, I did not hesitate to go there. The park and house at this last-named place were much finer than at Armsmott, and I passed my time there so agreeably, that instead of staying one week, I remained three.

I made some excursions with the Margravine by sea. We visited the Isle of Wight, which in some parts reminded me of Switzerland. This island is renowned for the gentle and peaceable manners of its inhabitants. They all live like one family, I am told, and enjoy the greatest peace and happiness. It is possible that since the time of which I write, a great many regiments having been quartered in the island, the tranquillity may have been diminished. The Isle of Wight and the Island of Ischia are the only ones on which I could have wished to pass my life.

These maritime excursions pleased me very much, and we frequently renewed them.

I found it very agreeable, at the time when London is deserted, to visit as many country-houses as I could, and I accepted most gratefully all the invitations I received. I thus made the best I could of the monotony of English life, which could never be to my taste, after having lived so long in Paris and St. Petersburg. I stayed some time at Stowe with the Marchioness of Buckingham. The mansion was magnificent and full of pictures by the old masters. I remember a grand portrait of Vandyke, where the hand was so beautiful and so finely in relief, that I was almost tempted to believe it real. The park at Stowe is perfection.

The Marquis and Marchioness of Buckingham received

French people with infinite grace and kindness. They had both been most generous in assisting distinguished *émigrés*; this I learnt through the Duc de Sérant, who had stayed a long time with them, and was truly grateful to this noble couple.

I also visited the country seat of Lord Moira. Though I have forgotten the name of his house, I remember that it was most comfortable, and scrupulously clean. Lord Moira's sister, Lady Charlotte, did the honours with much grace and kindness, but nevertheless it was dull! At dinner, the ladies left before the dessert; the men remaining to drink and talk politics. It is necessary to say, however, that at none of the entertainments at which I was present were the men ever intoxicated, which proves to me that if this custom existed in England as one heard so often, it never did so in good society. I must mention that I dined several times at Lord Moira's with the Duc de Berri, who had been out hunting all day, and I noticed that he drank nothing but water, though calumny asserted that he indulged in too much wine.

After dinner all the ladies used to retire into a long room, and occupied themselves with embroidery and wool work. No one spoke a word. On their side, the gentlemen took their books, and kept the same silence.

One fine moonlight night, I asked Lord Moira's sister if I might be allowed to take a stroll in the park. She replied that the shutters were closed, and that it would be imprudent to open them, as the picture gallery was on the ground floor. As there was a magnificent library, containing a beautiful collection of engravings, my only resource

was to take possession of these works, and look them all through, refraining as the custom was from making a single remark. On one occasion, I uttered an exclamation of delight at the sight of a particularly charming engraving, and shall not easily forget the surprised looks of all present. However, it is a fact, that the total absence of conversation in England is not caused by the impossibility of talking agreeably ; I know many English who are very witty, and I may add, I never met one who was a fool.

The season was too far advanced whilst I was at Lord Moira's for me to take any long walks in the neighbourhood. Lady Charlotte invited me to drive with her in her pony-carriage, which was as hard as a country cart, so that I could not endure it for any time. Englishwomen are so accustomed to the severity of their climate, that I have frequently met them in pouring rain in open carriages and with no umbrellas. They content themselves with wrapping a cloak round them, which is decidedly inconvenient to a foreigner, unaccustomed to such an aquatic mode of proceeding.

I had a great desire to see Warwick Castle, which I had heard so much praised. I went there hoping to visit it *incognito*, but as soon as Lord Warwick heard my name he at once came forward, and with the most obliging distinction, himself showed me the Castle.

After introducing me to his wife, who asked me to luncheon, and made me promise to spend a few days with them, Lord Warwick took me a drive round the park ; he also showed me, amongst many other works of art, an enormous antique vase of the greatest beauty. He also

pointed out to me the two little heads I had drawn in chalk on the panels of the door at Sir William Hamilton's. He told me he had paid a high price to him for them, to whom, however, I had not sold them.

I also visited Blenheim, belonging to the Duke of Marlborough, where I saw some superb pictures and a very fine park.

Often when returning from these different visits, I have stopped on the hills, four or five miles from London, in the hope of getting a look at this immense city, but the fog which hung over it was so dense, that I could never see anything but a few steeples.





CHAPTER XXXII.

I leave England—Rotterdam—Antwerp—M. d'Hédouville—I arrive in Paris—Madame Catalani—Mademoiselle Duchesnois—Madame Murat—I take her portrait.



THOUGH I had only intended to remain four or five months in England, I was there nearly three years, detained not merely by my pecuniary interests as a painter, but still more by the great kindness shown me. I have often heard it said that the English are not a hospitable nation ; I am far from participating in this opinion, and I shall ever retain a lively sense of gratitude for the reception accorded to me in London. I should not, therefore, have decided so quickly on returning to France, if I had not heard that my daughter had arrived in Paris ; I greatly desired to see her, and all the more that I heard privately that her father had allowed her to form several acquaintances, who appeared to be most unsuitable for such a young woman.

As, at this period, Bonaparte would not allow any of the English to leave France who had not done so before the breach of the Treaty of Amiens, Lady Herne, well known for her love of the arts, said I ought to be kept as an hostage. In fact, every possible motive was sought after by my amiable friends to induce me to remain, and, under

other circumstances, I could not have resisted their entreaties.

Just as I was getting into my postchaise to start, the charming Madame Grassini arrived. I thought she had come simply to wish me good-bye, but she declared she was going to accompany me to the seaport from which I was to embark, and made me get into her carriage, which was filled with pillows and other comforts.

"For what use are all these?" I asked.

"You do not know then," she replied, "that you are going to the worst inn in the world? you may have to remain there a week or more, if the wind is not favourable, and my intention is to remain with you."

I cannot say how deeply I felt this mark of interest. This beautiful woman left all the pleasures of London, her friends, without speaking of a crowd of adorers, simply to keep me company. I can never forget it.

I embarked for Rotterdam, where I arrived at five o'clock in the morning; but we were retained by *order* on board till nearly two o'clock. Immediately on landing, I went to see the Marquis de Beauharnais, brother-in-law to Joséphine, and then Prefect of Rotterdam. As I came from London, he informed me I must remain from eight to ten days in the town, which annoyed me exceedingly; more than this, I was sent for to see General Oudinot, and I own that I felt rather frightened at this visit; but the General received me so kindly, that my fears soon fled, and I resigned myself to wait till my liberty was granted.

The Spanish Ambassador, whom I had known at St. Petersburg, and who resided at the Hague, having heard

of my misfortune, took pity on me ; he frequently called in his carriage to take me for drives in the environs. At last, after waiting ten days, I received my passport and I was free.

I left for Antwerp, where the Prefect, M. d'Hédouville, showed me the greatest attention ; he took me all over the city and I saw everything remarkable in it. On the following day I resumed my journey to Paris.

It was a great joy to meet again my old friends, and above all my daughter. Her husband, who had accompanied her to France, had been commissioned by Prince Narischkin to procure singers for St. Petersburg ; he remained a few months and then returned alone, for love had long since fled, and my daughter stayed in Paris to my great satisfaction. For her misfortune and my own, my daughter had a most lively disposition ; and I was unable to make her feel the disgust I felt for bad company. Added to this, I possessed no influence over her mind, and one may imagine how many bitter tears she made me shed. But she was my daughter ; her beauty and talents made her most seductive, and though I could not induce her to live with me, seeing that she persisted in seeing people whom I would not receive, I saw her every day, which was still a great joy for me.

The first person with whom I made acquaintance on my return from London, was Madame Catalani, whose splendid voice was the delight of Paris. This great singer was young and beautiful. Her voice was the most astonishing that one could possibly hear, her execution and compass were marvelous. I took the portrait of this

charming woman, and kept it as a companion to the one I took of Madame Grassini.

I hastened to resume my musical evenings, and Madame Catalani was so obliging as to sing at them, to the great satisfaction of all my company. We had very little instrumental music ; for Viotti was absent, and it was not till some time later that the delicious violin of Lafont came to console us for his loss. I remember that on one occasion Madame Dugazon, who was passing an evening with me, sang the romance of Nina, by Dalayrac, with so much expression, that we could not restrain our tears.

As I could not always have music, I got up *tableaux vivants*, which had had so much success at St. Petersburg ; taking care to place behind the gauze screen the handsomest men and prettiest women ; I arranged some charming ones.

For a person who desired to make time pass agreeably for her friends, I had what I must call a piece of rare good fortune. My brother was giving at this period lessons in declamation to Mademoiselle Duchesnois. He brought her to me, and made her recite in my drawing-room some fragments of her parts. We were charmed with her superior talent, and could not imagine why they would not engage her at the Comédie Française. The fact was that Mademoiselle Duchesnois was not pretty ; but I felt sure that the public on hearing her would soon forget her plainness. As I had very little personal influence, I called on Madame de Montesson, who was in favour at the Court of Bonaparte. I vaunted my young actress so highly, that she invited her to a grand *soirée*, in order to hear her to advantage.

Everyone was enchanted, and our *protégée* was soon admitted. The success she obtained on the very first day, in the part of Phèdre, was such, that it enabled her to hold her own against the most beautiful creature ever seen on the stage, Mademoiselle Georges, who made her *début* at the same time and in the same company.

On the first day of her public appearance, I gave Mademoiselle Duchesnois my best advice, as a painter, on her costume and head-dress. I cannot express how rejoiced I was at her great success. I was truly glad to have contributed to the fortune of this young girl, who had no other means of existence than her talent, and who was besides a most excellent person. She has always been most grateful for the support my brother and myself afforded her, and until her death remained my friend.

I often visited Madame de Ségur. Her husband told me that my visit to England had greatly displeased the Emperor, who said to him :

“ Madame Le Brun has gone to see *her friends*.”

Bonaparte's grudge against me was not however very strong, for a few days after having spoken in this manner, he sent M. Denon to order me to paint for him the portrait of his sister, Madame Murat. I did not dare to refuse, though I was to receive only seventy-two pounds for it, being just half the sum I was in the habit of receiving for portraits of that size. This sum was even less, on taking into consideration that I included Madame Murat's little girl in the picture, without augmenting the price.

It would be impossible for me to describe all the con-

trarieties and torments I underwent whilst painting this picture. At the first sitting Madame Murat appeared with two maid-servants, who had to dress her hair before I could begin my painting. On my representing to her that it was impossible for me to commence whilst she was thus engaged, she consented to send the women away. Then she constantly missed her appointment, so that though I wished to finish the painting as soon as possible, she kept me in Paris nearly the whole summer. Besides this, the interval between her sittings was so long, that she frequently changed the manner of wearing her hair. The same thing happened with her dresses, and the last was always the one to be adopted. In short, the constant worry Madame Murat made me undergo, upset my temper so much, that one day when she was in my studio, I said to M. Denon, loud enough for her to hear :

“ I have painted real princesses who have not tormented me, or kept me waiting for them.”

The fact is that Madame Murat was quite ignorant that punctuality is the politeness of kings, as Louis XIV. so well expressed, and who in truth was no parvenu.





CHAPTER XXXIII.

Louveciennes—Madame Hocquart—The Twenty-first of March, 1814
—Foreigners—The Pavilion of Louveciennes—Louis XVIII.—
The Twentieth of March, 1815—The Family of Louis XVIII.



S I had no wish to pass my summers in Paris, I bought a country-house at Louveciennes, which I still inhabit. The lovely view of the Seine, with the delicious woods of Marly, and the cultivated country around Louveciennes, made me think it a sort of promised land, and it is in fact one of the most charming of the environs of Paris.

Another pleasure for me in my rural establishment, was having for neighbours Madame Pourat, and her daughter the Comtesse Hocquart. Madame Hocquart is one of those distinguished women whom it is a pleasure to know. Her natural gaiety and wit had always drawn me to her, and it was a real good fortune for me to be living near her. Amongst her many talents she was a perfect actress, and in certain parts might be compared without any flattery to Mademoiselle Comtat. The result of this was, that theatricals were much in vogue at her house, and that a crowd came from Paris to applaud Madame Hocquart.

On arriving at Louveciennes, I at once went to visit

the Pavilion, which I had last seen in all its beauty in the month of September. It was quite empty, and all that had ornamented it in the time of Madame du Barri had disappeared. Not only had the statues and busts been taken away, but even the chimney bronzes, and the locks of the doors. In short, the Revolution had visited the place, as it had everywhere else. The four walls still remained, whilst at Marly, Sceaux, Belle Vue, and many other places, the name alone is left.

I was established at Louveciennes when the allied armies advanced for the second time on Paris. Everyone knows that the foreign troops ill-treated the villages much more than the towns ; also, I shall never forget the night of the 21st of March, 1814.

Ignorant that the danger was so near, I had not even meditated flight. It was eleven o'clock at night, and I had just gone to bed, when my Swiss servant, Joseph, who spoke German, entered my room, thinking I should need some one to protect me. The village had just been invaded by the Prussians, who were pillaging all the houses, and Joseph himself was followed by three soldiers, with atrocious faces, who, sword in hand, approached my bed. Joseph made himself hoarse with saying in German that I was Swiss and ill ; but, without listening to him, they commenced by taking my gold snuff-box, which lay on the table by my bed-side. Then they felt to see if I had concealed any silver under the clothes, and one of them coolly cut out a piece of the counterpane with his sabre. One of them, who appeared to be French, or at least spoke our language perfectly, said to them, " Give

her back her box," but far from obeying, they went to my desk, took possession of all its contents, and pillaged my wardrobes. In short, after having made me pass four hours in the most dreadful fright, these terrible people left my house, where I could no longer remain. This was not the only time I was obliged to quit it in a similar manner. On the return of the Allies in 1815, the English visited Louveciennes. They took, amongst other things, a superb lacquered box, which I regretted extremely, as it had been given me at St. Petersburg by my old friend, Count Strogonoff.

My desire was to reach Saint-Germain, but the road was very unsafe. I went, therefore, and sought refuge at the house of an excellent person, who lived at Marly, near the Pavilion of Madame du Barri. Other women, as frightened as myself, had chosen this place as their asylum. We all dined together, and slept six in one room, where it was impossible to get any rest, as the nights passed in continual alarms, and, besides, I felt uneasy on account of my poor servant, to whom I owed my life. This honest fellow had remained in my house, in order to look after the soldiers, and to fulfil their requirements, which made me tremble for him, as the village had been given over to pillage. The peasants bivouacked in the vineyards, and slept on straw in the open air, after having been despoiled of all they possessed.

I was so terrified by all I heard, as also by the firing, which was incessant, that one evening I tried to get down into a cellar, where I wanted to remain; but in doing so hurt my leg, and was obliged to go back again.

The last affair took place at Roquencourt. There was fighting also close to Madame Hocquart's house, and very near the place in which I was. We heard that, as soon as the fighting had ceased, the Prussians had ransacked the house of a very Bonapartist lady, who, whilst the fighting was going on, cried out from her terrace to the French, "Kill all these people there!" The victors, who had heard her, entered her house and broke all the furniture and glasses, whilst she fled to Versailles.

Though we could gain little information of what was going on from Paris, yet it was easy to see the tradespeople of Louveciennes, who met every evening in the house we inhabited, were all desirous for the return of the Bourbons. At last, the Mayor, whose conduct had been both honourable and energetic, entered the village, surrounded by all the country folk, wearing the white scarf. The following day we were all assembled in the garden of our refuge, when some one came in to tell us that Monsieur Dagwet had just arrived, and had brought the news of the entry of Monsieur le Comte d'Artois into France.

This news gave me the greatest delight, and I at once started for Paris, leaving my good Joseph at Louveciennes to look after my house. I have kept the letters I received from this faithful servant, who groaned at seeing my garden ravaged, my cellar emptied, my beautiful court destroyed, and my rooms plundered. "I implore them," he wrote, "to be less destructive, and to be contented with what I give them, but they reply, 'The French did much worse to us.'" And in this the Prussians were right. My poor Joseph and myself were the victims of bad example.

It was on the 12th of April, 1814, that I had the happiness of seeing M. le Comte d'Artois make his entry into Paris. It is impossible to describe my feelings on this occasion ; I wept for joy. One knows with what enthusiasm the great majority of the Parisians received our princes. As people asked M. le Comte d'Artois for news of the King, whom he preceded, he replied :

“He always suffers in his legs, but his head is excellent, we will walk for him, and he will think for us.”

Experience has proved the justice of these words, for the strong sense of Louis XVIII. was very necessary to strengthen the restoration at this epoch, when the Bonapartists were still so numerous.

At last Louis XVIII. himself entered Paris, bringing pardon and peace for all ; I went on to the Quai des Orfèvres to see him pass. He was in an open carriage with Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême ; the proclamation which he had just had announced, having been received with acclamations of joy, the excitement of the crowd was great and general. Flags hung from every window, and the cries of “Vive le roi,” were so hearty and unanimous that I was quite overcome. One could read on the expressive face of the Duchess d'Angoulême the satisfaction such a reception afforded her ; her smile was sweet, but sad ; a very natural circumstance, for she was following the same road that her mother had taken on going to the guillotine, and she knew it. Nevertheless the acclamations the sight of the King and herself elicited, must have greatly consoled her afflicted heart. The crowd followed them to the doors of the Tuileries, singing and

dancing before the Palace ; the King then came to one of the windows and kissed his hand repeatedly to the people, when their delight appeared to know no bounds.

In the evening there was a great reception at the Tuileries—an immense quantity of ladies went to it ; the King spoke to all with perfect grace, and recalled to some of them flattering anecdotes about their families.

As I had a great desire to see Louis XVIII., I mixed in the crowd on the Sunday to see him pass along the gallery when he went to mass. I was placed with all the rest in front of the windows, in such a manner that the King could see us perfectly ; as soon as he perceived me, he came to me, shook me by the hand in the most amiable manner and said many flattering things on the pleasure it gave him to see me again. As he remained some moments thus holding my hand, and he did not address any other lady present, those who surrounded us no doubt took me for a very grand personage, for as soon as the King had passed, a young officer, who saw me alone, came and offered me his arm, and would not leave me till he had placed me in my carriage.

The greater number of persons who came back with our Princes were my own friends or acquaintances. It was very sweet, after so many years of exile, to find oneself in one's own country ; but, alas ! this happiness was not of long duration, and even whilst we were rejoicing over the change, Bonaparte had landed at Cannes !

I have been able, like others, to compare the reception which he received at the capital with that which had so recently been offered to the King. It was on the 19th of

March, 1815, at midnight, that Louis XVIII. and all the royal family quitted Paris. Napoleon entered the following day, the 20th of March ; but though he was brought back by the army and sustained by bayonets, the Parisians were none the less in a state of stupor. Everyone well knew that he brought with him into France, war and ruin ; so the cries of "Vive l'Empereur !" were very rare. Whether it was chance or calculation, he did not arrive until eight o'clock in the evening, and at once took possession of the Tuileries, surrounded by an exultant army, but a population mournful and sad.

The King had retired to Gand, and I remember the lower class of the people sang loudly in the streets of Paris : "Rendez-nous notre paire de gants." I have not forgotten another bon-mot of a flower girl, who said to a woman by her side, selling lilies :

"Well ! there is nothing more to be done with lilies, and I shall sell nothing but violets."

"That's true," replied the other, "it is very easy to make them lie low, but I defy you to do so with the lilies."

Without wishing to insult the memory of a great captain, and of the brave generals and soldiers who aided him in gaining so many splendid victories, I may ask what these victories have done for us, and if we are the better by one inch of ground for all the blood they cost us. For my part, I own that the bulletins of the campaign in Russia revolted me ; one of the last, after having spoken of the thousands of French soldiers we had lost, finished thus : "The Emperor was never in better health." On reading

this bulletin at the house of my friends, Mesdames de Bellegarde, we were so indignant that we threw it into the fire.

That which proves how tired the people were of these eternal wars, was the little enthusiasm that they showed during the Hundred Days. More than once I saw Bonaparte appear at the window, and retire at once very angry, for the only acclamations he received were from a crowd of gamins, paid no doubt to cry derisively : "Vive l'Empereur !" Let them compare this indifference of the population to the joy which burst forth on the return of the King, who re-entered Paris on the 8th of July, 1815 ; this joy was universal, for after so many disasters Louis XVIII. brought in peace.

From this time it can be seen how much this Prince joined to his other brilliant qualities both wisdom and skill. The circumstances were difficult, and Louis XVIII. was the very monarch needed for the occasion ; to much courage and coolness he united a great elevation of mind ; his manners were royal ; he gave liberally ; his features were not wanting in beauty, and their expression was very noble, and though very infirm, his appearance at once inspired involuntary respect. His favourite recreation was to converse on literature with intellectual people ; as he was a good Latin scholar, he liked conversing in this language with our most learned Latinists ; his memory was prodigious, he could recite any remarkable pieces out of any book he had read once.

Louis XVIII. greatly enjoyed and patronised the Comédie Française ; he went often to this theatre, and he

thoroughly appreciated the talent of Talma. The King held frequent long conversations with him, and generally in English, as they both spoke this language perfectly. I am told that Talma, said : "I prefer the grace of Louis XVIII. to the pension of Bonaparte."

This grace, in fact, was the great charm of the Princes, it doubled the value of each gift. The Comte d'Artois was not behind the King in this respect. When after the death of Louis XVIII. he became King, I was at the Louvre on the day he distributed medals to the painters and sculptors. Before giving them he said in the most gracious manner : "These are not encouragements, but recompenses." All the artists were touched by the tact and flattery of these words.

He noticed me in the crowd, and expressed himself so pleased at seeing me again, and looking so well, that I had difficulty in restraining my tears.

If M. le Duc de Berri had not all the graces of his father, he had the same tact and ready wit, so useful to princes. I select one example among a thousand. The first time he reviewed the troops, he heard some of them cry out, "Vive l'Empereur !" "You are right, my friends," he at once replied, "every one must live." Then these same soldiers cried out, "Vive le Duc de Berri !"

His kindness of disposition was so great that not only did he interest himself in all that concerned his friends, but in his own household he conducted himself like the father of a family. He was adored by all his servants, and he made use of his influence to encourage them in good

conduct, and induced them to be careful and save their money. One day, on getting into his carriage, a little kitchen-boy ran up to him, saying, "My prince, I have saved fifteen francs this year." "Well, my child, this will make them thirty," replied the Duc de Berri, who doubled the sum.

The Duc de Berri was very orderly in his expenses ; his greatest extravagance was his taste for art, which was shared by his amiable wife. The Duchesse de Berri delighted in encouraging young artists ; she bought their pictures, and ordered a great many.

I dare not speak of the Duchesse d'Angoulême. What could I say which would not be less than truth ? The virtues of this princess are known to the entire world, and I should fear to lessen what history will say of her. Such was the family the Restoration gave back to us.

I leave to others the task of explaining why so many virtues and so much goodness did not suffice to guard and keep their throne ; my grateful heart can only regret it.





CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Queen's Portrait—M. Briffaut—M. Aimé Martin—Désaugiers—Gros—I paint the Duchesse de Berri.



URING Bonaparte's reign the large portrait I had made of the Queen was stored away out of sight in the Château of Versailles. I went one day to see it. On arriving at the Prince's entrance, a custodian took me into the room where it was shut up, and where the public were not allowed to enter; the guardian who opened the door, recognised me, as he had seen me in Rome, and exclaimed, "Ah! how glad I am to see Madame le Brun!" This man hastened to turn my painting, it was placed facing the wall, for Bonaparte on hearing that many people came to see it, had ordered it to be taken away. An order which was not well carried out, since they contrived to show it, and the custodian, when I wanted to give him a trifle, refused, saying, I made him gain a good deal without that.

At the Restoration this picture was once more exposed to view. It represented Marie Antoinette having near her the first Dauphin and Madame holding the Duc de Normandie on her knees.

I kept at home another painting of the Queen, which I

had executed in Bonaparte's time. Marie Antoinette was represented ascending into heaven ; with Louis XVI. and his children seated on some clouds (in allusion to the two they had lost.) I sent this picture to the Comtesse de Chateaubriand to place in the Establishment of Sainte-Thérèse which she had founded. It was put in the vestibule of the church, and the following is the letter she wrote on the subject.

“ On Wednesday, Madame, I shall be at your orders, and I feel much affected by the pious pilgrimage you intend to undertake. Madame la Comtesse de Choiseul was well pleased with the place we selected for your admirable allegory. I wish it were more worthily situated, but it is the best we have in this poor Establishment.”

Since peace seemed restored to my country, I no longer wished to leave it, and I spent my days between Paris and Louveciennes ; for I was as fond as ever of my pretty house in the latter place. I passed eight months of the year there, and my life was very peaceful and contented. I painted, I amused myself with my garden, I took long solitary walks, and on Sundays I received my friends.

I liked Louveciennes so much, that wishing to leave some souvenir of myself, I painted for the Church a Sainte Geneviève, on which occasion Madame de Genlis, who knew I was engaged on this work, sent me some very pretty verses. If I gave pictures I also received them in a most delightful manner. I had often expressed a wish that my friends would paint upon the panels of my sitting-room at Louveciennes, and leave me some token of themselves. One fine summer's morning, at four o'clock, dur-

ing my slumbers, M. le Prince de Crespy, the Baron de Feisthamel, M. de Rivière, and my niece, Eugénie Le Brun, set silently to work, and at ten o'clock each one had completed his panel. My astonishment can be imagined, when on coming down to breakfast I entered my room and found it adorned with these charming paintings, besides bouquets of flowers, for it was my fête-day. The tears came into my eyes, and that was my only way of thanking my friends.

I had not given up my Saturday parties in Paris. Death had taken from me my dear Abbé Delille, and several other literary characters, who had long been one of their greatest attractions. But I formed new acquaintances, some of which became very dear. I shall mention M. Briffaut first; he is now an Academician, and was the author of a tragedy performed with much success at the Comédie Française, (Ninus II.) and some excellent verses; his epistolary style was quite wonderful in its grace and ease. When I was in the country, and he could not come and see me, he wrote, and I may say that his letters almost compensated for his absence; friendship apart, many might be justly compared with those of Madame de Sévigné—I have preserved them very carefully.

I also saw M. Desprès* and M. Aimé Martin; † M.

* Jean-Baptiste Desprès, born at Dijon, June 24th, 1752, died in Paris, March 2nd, 1832. He was a journalist, and Councillor of State in Holland; he was a member of the French University, a dramatical author and translator of English and Latin works.

† Louis-Aimé Martin was author of "Lettres à Sophie sur la Physique, la Chimie et l'Histoire Naturelle," a work crowned by the French Academy. He was a friend of Bernardin de St. Pierre, and

Desprès was one of the most witty men I ever met ; he did not live long to adorn society, and was much regretted for his talents and worth. M. Aimé Martin will I hope be long preserved to the affection of his friends and the esteem of the public, who are indebted to him for many excellent works.

M. Désaugiers* was another of my friends ; his bright face and genial spirit were enough to enliven any repast. He often dined with me, and I remember the Princess Kourakin always invited herself on those occasions, saying that M. Désaugiers was her delight ; at dessert he treated us to some of his charming songs, of which he composed several which are inimitable for power and gaiety ; the Comte de Forbin,† who knew them all, took care to ask him for the best, and our indiscretion never tired his kindness in complying with our request.

Another person with whom I was very intimate was the celebrated painter Gros:‡ I knew him when he was

after his death married his widow, and adopted his daughter Virginie. He was professor of literature at the Ecole Polytechnique, etc.

* Marc-Antoine Désaugiers, born at Fréjus in 1772, died in Paris, 1827, composed a great number of plays for the stage, which were reproduced at the Théâtres Français et Italien, for the Opéra Comique, etc. His parody on the opera, " Les Petites Danaïdes," was played over four hundred times.

† Louis-Nicholas, Comte de Forbin, archeological painter and man of letters, was born 1777, he was a Member of the Institute, Director-General of the Louvre Museum, Chevalier of the Order of St. Michael, and Commander of the Legion of Honour.

‡ Antoine-Jean Le Gros was born at Paris, March 16th, 1771, and died June 25th, 1835. His body was found in the Seine, near Meudon.

barely seven years old, at which time I painted his portrait, and saw even then in his young eyes a love for painting and colour. On my return to France I was astonished, nevertheless, to find the child a man of genius, and the head of a school of painting. From that time, a friendship sprung up between us, which daily increased, for Gros was a generous and sincere friend. I took a great interest in his successes, and was very happy when he was rewarded for his fine painting of the cupola of St. Geneviève by being made a Baron.

Gros was a man of natural impulses, quick to feel. He was equally enthusiastic about a good action or a beautiful picture. He did not care for society ; he rarely spoke when in a crowd, but he listened attentively, and always answered with a smile or a single word, always very *à propos* of the subject. His death made me feel very grieved. Soon before leaving us for good, he dined with me and I noticed that he seemed to take much to heart some criticisms which he ought to have allowed to pass unobserved. As an artist, as a friend, I shall always regret this great painter, and the sad circumstances of his violent death make my regrets all the more painful.

But I have allowed my reminiscences to carry me away from that time of my existence to which I had led my readers. I must return to it. In 1819, Monsieur le Duc de Berri wished to buy my "Sybil," which he had seen in London at my studio, and although this picture was the one of my works which I liked best, I hastened to satisfy his demand. A few years afterwards, I painted the portrait of the Duchesse de Berri, who gave me her sittings

in the Tuileries with great punctuality, besides which it was impossible for anyone to be kinder than she was to me. One day, whilst I was painting her, she said, "Wait a moment," and, getting up, went to her library, and fetching out a book that contained an article in my praise, she read it aloud, from the beginning to the end.

During one of our sittings, the Duc de Bordeaux brought his copy-book to his mother, on which the master had written "Very Good." The Duchesse gave him two louis, whereupon the young Prince, who might have been about six years old, began to jump for joy, saying, "There is something for my poor ! but first for my old woman." When he had left us, the Duchess told me he spoke of an old woman he often met out-doors, and whom he was very fond of. It was nice to see how this child resembled his mother in his kindly disposition—her ear was always open to the complaints of the unfortunate.

When the Duchesse gave me a sitting, I often felt annoyed at the numbers of people who visited her. She noticed this, and was good enough to say, "Why did you not ask me to go to your house ?" which she did the last two sittings. I confess that I could hardly help comparing the thoughtfulness of this Princess during the hours I spent with her, to those dreadful ones which Madame Murat made me pass.

I finished two portraits of the Duchesse de Berri. In one, she wore a red velvet dress, and in the other, one of blue velvet. I do not know what became of these portraits.



CHAPTER XXXV.

Cruel Losses I sustained in my Family—Voyage to Bordeaux—Méréville—The Monastery of Marmoutier—Return to Paris—My Nieces.



MUST now speak of the last sad years of my life, when, in a very short space of time, I saw disappear from this world the beings I loved best. I lost Monsieur Le Brun first. It was true that I had long ceased to have any intercourse with him, but I was none the less much grieved by his death.* You cannot lose for ever without sorrow a person attached to you by such an intimate tie as that of marriage. But this loss did not approach the cruel one caused me by the death of my daughter. I hastened to her side as soon as I heard of her illness, but all hope of recovery soon disappeared, and I cannot express what I felt when I saw there was no chance of saving her life. When I saw her on the last day, and my eyes fell on that altered and lovely face, I fainted. Madame de Noisville, an old friend, who had accompanied me, forced me to leave this bed of sorrow. She held me up, for my knees refused to support me, and

* Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Le Brun died in 1813.

took me to my own home. The next day I had no child.* Madame de Verdun came to tell me, and vainly tried to soothe my grief, for the naughtinesses of the poor little thing were all blotted out of my memory, and I saw her as in the days of her childhood—as I see her now Alas! she was so young! Why did she not outlive me?

It was in 1819 that I lost my daughter, and in 1820 I lost my brother. So many afflictions succeeding each other made me profoundly melancholy, and my friends, distressed at my appearance, counselled me to try what change of scene and travelling would do. I determined on visiting Bordeaux. I did not know that town, and the route I had to traverse, in order to reach it, would be full of interest.

As I went by way of Orleans I visited Méréville, which belonged to M. de Laborde. His father, who was enormously rich, had spent millions in embellishing this really beautiful estate. Nowhere could one see finer trees, a more abundant vegetation, and nowhere has art, joined to exquisite taste, done more to add to the beauties of nature. In fact it would take too long to enumerate the many lovely objects which render the park of Méréville such an enchanting place; it surpasses in my mind anything I saw in England of the same description. It was laid out principally by Robert, the landscape painter, and would make subjects for beautiful pictures.

The château, with its four Gothic towers, giving it the

* Mademoiselle Jeanne-Julie-Louise Le Brun, wife of M. Nigris, died December 8th, 1819, in Paris.

appearance of a feudal manor, was splendidly furnished, The dining and billiard rooms were admirably decorated. and the great hall with its marbles, bronzes, and statues, made it a residence fit for royalty.

I arrived at Orleans, where I visited the principal places of interest ; the cathedral, amongst others, standing out in its solitary darkness against the blue sky, for since my departure I had always enjoyed lovely weather ; so that I visited without any hindrance the ruins of these ancient châteaux, of which there only remained a few crumbling walls decked with ivy. For a painter, the route I had chosen was full of interest ; on every side were noble ruins which often caused sad reflections, when you thought that wars and revolutions destroyed more in one century than time would do in a thousand years.

As soon as I reached Blois I visited the Château de Chambord, that romantic spot than which one could see nothing that has a more powerful effect on the imagination. You can stand for ages before those old wooden doors on which are sculptured the initials and devices of Francis I., recalling the story of that amorous king, and many other tales less ancient and less romantic. I should like to have carried away those gates and put them in frames. I should like also to have drawn the interior of the tower where three caryatides are sculptured, of which two represent Diana of Poitiers, and one in the middle, Francis I. ; but the heat was so great, added to a strong wind, that being quite overcome, in consequence, I could not find a corner to shelter myself. Now, alas ! Æolus alone inhabits those towers and terraces, and yet I could

scarcely tear myself from a building which is unique of its kind.

I next visited Chanteloup. This château is superb, and still retains some of the splendours belonging to the Duc de Choiseul. The park must have been magnificent ; near the lake is a pagoda, which the Duke had caused to be constructed in memory of the friends who had visited him in his exile. As all the names inscribed were those of nobles, the Revolution, with its great broom, had swept them away, notwithstanding that they were engraved on marble.

The air in this lovely place was so wonderful that it made me feel another creature. To tell the truth, I am gifted on this point with an instinct which is quite curious : I taste the air as gluttons would taste good food, and I believe my health depends on my susceptibility for breathing what is pure as much as I possibly can.

This instinct of which I speak would not permit me to sojourn at Tours for any time. This town is very pretty, but a smell of drains pursued me in every street. My inn, which was the best, possessed it also, in spite of the vinegar and odorous herbs I used to disperse it, so that I could not remain there longer than two days ; however, I had time to visit the Cathedral, Academy, and several ruined châteaux. Then I crossed the Loire in a boat to go and weep over the remains of the old monastery of Marmoutier.

I was taken to these ruins by the director of the Academy at Tours. Soon after my arrival I had paid him a visit ; he presented to me all his young pupils, and was

kind enough to act as cicerone to me, a great help, seeing he had lived in the town for thirty-five years and knew the environs by heart.

A gang of wood-cutters were pulling down and destroying the remains of the Monastery, whilst I was there; some Dutch merchants had wished to buy this place and convert it into a manufactory. They offered 300,000 francs, which was refused, and afterwards the wood-cutters got it for 20,000 on the condition that this splendid edifice should be pulled down! Vandals could have done no worse! Well! everywhere on my way I heard of the same sort of destruction.

Under the gateway of the second entrance to Marmoutier I sketched a tower; it is beneath this tower that the Seven Sleepers are buried in a chapel near the large abbey church, where their tombs are hewn out of the rock. Tradition says that the seven sleepers were seven disciples of St. Martin, who having renounced the world with him, lived in a most saintly manner under his leadership, and died in the monastery without being attacked with any illness, all seven on the same day. Their death was reported to be so calm, and their faces were so little altered that they might have been thought to be sleeping, from which cause they derived their name of "the Seven Sleepers." They are still honored as Saints at Marmoutier, and their fête is publicly held in that town.

To reach Bordeaux I passed through Poitiers and Angoulême. These towns are picturesquely situated on the summit of a hill; from Paris to Bordeaux the carriage road is excellent, so that I traversed it in great comfort.

On arriving at Bordeaux I put up at the best hotel, Fumel's; it was admirably situated, facing the port, which is large enough to contain thousands of vessels. I cannot describe my delight at the magnificent spectacle spread out before my eyes whenever I approached my window; it was like a beautiful dream. So many ships, brigs and boats continually passing to and fro, whilst the larger vessels remained motionless; silence reigned over this immense expanse of water, everything seemed like fairy-land. Although I spent nearly a week at Bordeaux and enjoyed this spectacle night and day, I never tired. By moonlight it was particularly beautiful; a few little lights then appeared on the hill-sides, and it was illuminated as if by magic.

It is true that if I can say a good deal for the beauty of this town, I know little or nothing of its inhabitants; for with the exception of the Prefect, the Comte de Tournon, who was fond of drawing and very kind to me, I made no other acquaintances. I did not renounce my habit of visiting the town and environs; I saw the cemetery, whose sepulchral regularity pleased me immensely, and which on that account I prefer to any I have seen—Père-la-Chaise alone excepted. I also visited the synagogue, built after the model of Solomon's Temple. It is a most interesting building, and so mysterious that it seems to invite one to pray. The remains of Gallien's Circus are very imposing; only a few walls are now left, but one can still admire some fragments of Roman antiquities, such as the low wall, and an amphitheatre two hundred and seven feet long and one hundred and forty wide.

I felt very glad afterwards to have undertaken this long journey, all the more so because thanks to my fondness for ruins I brought back with me a portfolio full of drawings done on the spot. If I perceived on my way an old tower, as soon as I reached my inn I hastened to get near it ; often whilst I was drawing, some of the inhabitants of the environs would gather round me. One day, whilst I was lamenting over so much destruction with some of these folks, one of them said :

“I see that Madame la Comtesse had some châteaux near here.”

“No,” I replied, “my châteaux are all in Spain.”

The title of Countess, which always greeted me, did not surprise me at all, I was accustomed to see myself treated as a great lady ; in all the inns I had titles lavished upon me, but I owed this honour to my carriage, which was fashionable, so I did not become proud ; I only had to pay a little more in consequence. My health benefited by the change, and I returned to Paris in a more cheerful frame of mind.

This little journey was the last I made up to the time I write this. I took up again with my usual habits and painting, which of all my distractions is the one I like best. Although I have had the misfortune to lose so many who were dear to me, I am not left quite alone. I have already spoken of Madame Rivière, my niece, who by her tender care is the joy of my life. I must also mention my other niece, Eugénie Le Brun, now Madame J. Tripier Le Franc. Her studies prevented my seeing her at first as much as I would have liked, for she gave great promise

from her earliest youth of becoming a good painter, much to my delight. I took pleasure in guiding and advising her and following her progress. I am now fully recompensed, for she has realised all my hopes, by her charming character and great talent for painting. She has followed in my footsteps, by adopting portrait painting, in which she is very successful, owing to her eye for colour, truthfulness, and knack of making a perfect likeness. Young still, she can yet add to a reputation which her timidity and modesty caused her to think as barely possible to obtain. Madame Tripier Le Franc and Madame de Rivière are become my children, their care and devotion throw a charm over my existence, and it is near these two beloved creatures and the friends who are still left to me, that I hope to end peacefully a wandering but quiet life, laborious certainly, but honourable.





POSTSCRIPTUM.

BY THE EDITOR.



THE old age of Madame Vigée Le Brun passed away very peacefully, in the midst of the comfortable fortune she had so nobly acquired, and the affectionate care of her niece, Madame J. Tripier Le Franc. She preserved those of her former friends who were spared by death, and made some new ones. In her *salon* the most distinguished members of all classes of Parisian society were wont to assemble : men of the world, artists, and literary characters, were all glad to assemble in a house free from the passions and intrigues of the day, and enlivened by cheerful intercourse. In the winter she inhabited Paris ; in the summer the country-house she possessed at Louveciennes, where the memories of her youth seemed to awaken in the presence of the lovely scenery by which she was surrounded.

Madame Vigée Le Brun was born at Paris, rue Coquillière on the 16th of April, 1755, she died in that city, in the Rue St. Lazare on the 29th of May, 1842. Her remains are interred in the cemetery at Louveciennes.

During the life of Madame Vigée Le Brun, no public establishment in France possessed any of her works ;

which is all the more surprising because, as a portrait painter, this artist has had no rival before or since. After her death, Madame and M. Tripier le Franc, incited by a generous and filial sentiment, presented to the Louvre Museum two of the pictures which became their heritage on their Aunt's death. These two paintings are : "A Portrait of Madame Vigée Le Brun with her daughter in her arms : " the other ; "A portrait of a young girl with a muff." It is enough to look once only at these works to feel convinced that the praise we have given to Madame Le Brun is in no way exaggerated. These portraits are full of life and sentiment ; they are masterpieces of delicacy and expression, and are of such perfect workmanship that they have preserved all the freshness they had on leaving the artist's studio ; and yet their execution dates back to the end of the last century. In all, Madame Le Brun painted a total of six hundred and sixty portraits, fifteen pictures, and nearly two hundred landscapes in Switzerland and in England.

THE END.



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